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INES BELLI

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# INES BELLI

Ines Belli recalls Italian-American life in San Francisco's North Beach  
between 1900 and 1950.





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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name Ines Belli Molinari  
(First) (Last) (Maiden)

Date of Birth: 9/23/1915 Place of Birth: 520 Lombard, San Francisco

Name Date and Place of Birth

### GRANDPARENTS:

Giovanni Battista Molinari 3/15/1835, Fregarie, Italy

Caterina Cuneo 5/31/1849

Carlo Cuneo Pian dei Cunei, Italy

Caterina Gagliardo

### PARENTS:

Giovanni Molinari 2/16/1879, Fregarie, Italy

Rose Cuneo 10/24/1885, Pian dei Cunei, Italy

### SIBLINGS:

John Molinari 1909, San Francisco

Charles Molinari 1912, San Francisco





SPOUSE:

Date and Place of Birth

Date and Place Married

Rino J. Belli

7/9/1909, San Francisco

7/9/1939, San Francisco

CHILDREN:

Leon Belli

5/21/1941, San Francisco

David Belli

1/1/1945, San Francisco

Paul Belli

12/6/1953, San Francisco

Number of grandchildren: 5

Age ranges: 21 to 32

Number of great-grandchildren: 2

Age ranges: 2 to 4



PROJECT: TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS ORAL HISTORY

NARRATOR: Ines Belli

INTERVIEW DATE: August 25, 1999

INTERVIEWER: Audrey Tomaselli

TRANSCRIPT DATE: January 16, 2001

TRANSCRIBERS: Robert McMillan/Audrey Tomaselli

[ ]: Transcriber's/Interviewer's Comments

In this interview Ines Belli, who has lived all but three of her eighty-six years in the home her father built at 948 Union Street, tells the story of her family's life in San Francisco and California beginning with the Gold Rush, extending through the San Francisco 1906 Earthquake, up to and beyond the Great Depression. She recalls how her immigrant father established the successful scavenger business that would eventually become the Golden Gate Disposal Company. We learn of many aspects of Italian-American life including the protocols of courting, marriage and divorce, class differences in the Italian community, and the nature of the church and social organizations that served the community. The interview also provides a partial inventory of businesses central to the North Beach Italian-American world of a previous era.







**Charlie, Ines and John, c. 1916**

AUDREY TOMASELLI: Mrs. Belli, you just mentioned that your father lived in a boarding house on what was called Dupont Street -- now Grant Avenue.

INES BELLi: That's right.

AUDREY: What block was it on?

INES: I have no idea. And then when he got married, he moved to 520 Lombard. My uncle and he built two flats in the back and that's where we lived. We were upstairs; my uncle downstairs. And then when they got a little bit more money, they built three flats in the front.

AUDREY: Oh, it was all on Lombard Street?

INES: Yes, on Lombard; the same piece of property.

AUDREY: I see. And you were born in that house?

INES: Yes, and my brothers were too. My oldest brother is John Battista (John B.), and he's the one who became a judge. And the other was Charles, and he became an attorney. I'm the youngest. John is 90 or 91 now. And Charlie died at 65; he was about two years younger than John, and I'm about three or four years younger than Charlie.

AUDREY: When we talked on the phone the other night, you said that almost everybody on that block of Lombard Street came from the same region of Italy.





INES: Yes, and they were all . . . I would call them *paesani* -- is that what you would call friends? -- and then also relatives. And all the ladies were called Rose: Rosita, Rosinone, all that. And papa's name was Giovanni. And my uncle's was Paulo.

AUDREY: So how did you figure out which Rose you were talking to?

INES: Oh, my mother was a Rose. And my aunt was.

AUDREY: So when they said, "Oh Rose," how did you know which one?

INES: They either said "Rosita," "Rosini," "Rosi Picina", "Rosi Granda," you know. That's the way they got around it.

AUDREY: I see. What was the reason for calling everybody the same name?

INES: I don't know. In Italy, I guess it was popular at that time. Caterina was another one. In fact, I think my grandmother was a Catherine. I guess it was just popular at that time. Where my name comes from, I'll never know. My mother always claimed my uncle, who was my godfather . . . [changing her mind] No he wasn't my godfather, he was my uncle -- he brought this name "Ines" up, and that's how I got it. But nobody else in the family has the name.

AUDREY: Tell me about the region where everybody on that block came from.

INES: Most of them came from small towns outside of Chiavari: My mother was from Pian dei Cunei, Papa was from Fregarie. And when they got



baptized they went to San Colombana di Certenoli (that's the county seat, where all the records went).

AUDREY: And that's near Genoa?

INES: Well it's between Chiavari and Genoa. It's a back road. When you come out of Chiavari there's Carasco and you go all the way up, and you can go to Genoa that way.

AUDREY: You mentioned that the Torre family has a hotel and bar near there, right on the main road. Who are the Torres?

INES: My neighbor [who] lives down the street, is Madeline Torre. And her folks -- you see Madeline's mother came from the same side of the river as my mother, and her [Madeline's] father was a Cuneo and came from Chiavari. But the Torres [Madeline's husband's family] come right from the road, they were considered a little bit more, you know, they were not in the countryside so much, they were right on the road and they had a hotel and bar. It's called Bar Torre. And it's there very close to Pian dei Cunei. The bar and restaurant still exists.

AUDREY: And they were considered better off because they were near the road?

INES: Well, I would say they had more access to money. They were merchants. In fact, we stayed there, when we went back [to Italy] the second time, for two weeks. It's not a hotel anymore -- just a bar and restaurant. And the boys [Ines' three sons and their wives] went there to



visit two years ago ... My cousins live in Pian dei Cunei and they took them [her sons] there [to Bar Torre] for lunch and it was fabulous. They brought back a picture of the table. And she [Madeline Torre] has it [the photo]. They brought it back for her.

AUDREY: And is the bar and restaurant still in Madeline Torre's husband's family?

INES: Well it would have been his uncle who ran the place.

AUDREY: And your mother and her mother were friends?

INES: Yes. They would say *paesane*. Not related.

AUDREY: Were you and Madeline good friends?

INES: Yes. We're still friends. She's great on this stuff. She lives right down here [on Union Street]. Her father used to have Cuneo Bakery on Green Street. And then her uncle -- all Cuneos.

AUDREY: So your mother's maiden name was Cuneo, but they [she and Madeline's father] were not related?

INES: Right. Not related. See Madeline's mother was a Soracco. Her family was tied into the Soracco baking family [Liguria Bakery on the northeast corner of Filbert and Stockton] many years ago, and the family is still there. In fact, when Madeline's mother came from Italy, they lived there in that property [above Liguria Bakery]. And Madeline still has some holding, she and



her sister, something to do with the building. I think her uncles were in the business and they left it to her mother, and naturally they inherited . . . not the business, but the property, the building.

AUDREY: When you were growing up did the families go back to Italy often to visit like they do today?

INES: The first time we ever went back was in 1929, with my brothers, and we stayed about six months. Though my brothers came back earlier because one [John] was starting law school and the youngest [Charlie] was going to Santa Clara on a football scholarship, and they had to be there. Otherwise, you know.... But I stayed an extra two months.

While we were in Italy we traveled -- everything by train at that time -- and my oldest brother was a great guide. He had it all down pat. We went all over, and we enjoyed it. You know, I never forgot it. Then, when the boys [her brothers] came back, I stayed another two months. The reason we went to Italy is my grandmother was ill and my uncle had written, "If you want to see her alive..." to Mama. So off we went. She [her grandmother] died the following Christmas.

AUDREY: But you got to know your grandmother?

INES: Oh Yes. The one. My father's [mother] was gone already.

AUDREY: Is this old photograph from your father's side of the family?

INES: Yes. That's my great-grandfather and great-grandmother. My









**Great Grandpa and Great Grandma Molinari  
c. 1850**

father's grandparents.

AUDREY: Someone has written on the back of this photo: "He was the one born in 1799 and worked the Gold Rush in the U.S.A." So the fact that he came here to work the Gold Rush . . .

INES: Yes, he came around the Horn to work the Gold Rush.

AUDREY: Did he bring his wife with him?

INES: No, he went back [to Italy] and *his* son, which would have been my father's father, he came to the United States too. But he came across the country, not around the Horn. And he worked in the vegetable gardens which were at that time at [what is now] City Hall. And he always told my father when he emigrated, "Do not go and work in the vegetable gardens. They work you 14 hours a day and they feed you swill."

AUDREY: What is swill?

INES: Garbage. It's the food. They called it swill, something like that, in Italian.

AUDREY: Let me just clarify the generation patterns now. This gentleman (in the photo), your great grandfather, came during the Gold Rush to San Francisco, around the Horn from Italy, worked here for awhile, went back to Italy where he . . .

INES: . . . was already married to this lady [standing next to him in the



photo].

AUDREY: Do you think that this photograph was taken here or over there?

INES: Italy. Definitely. Because she didn't come here.

AUDREY: Oh that's right. And then he went back to Italy. Do you think he went back with any money?

INES: Oh, I'm sure. Oh yes. Otherwise he wouldn't have gone back. That's what they came for. They lived in a province [in Italy] that was very poor. You know, you had a family of five; and I guess the idea was to come . . . they came here to work with the intention of going back. So they didn't buy anything here, no property or anything. But when my father came, he had no intention of going back because he [had been] in the Italian Army three years, and that's a long time; and he had no intention of ever going back.

AUDREY: So your great-grandfather's son came, who would have been your grandfather, came and worked in the vegetable area. And that is where City Hall is now?

INES: Yes. I guess in those times it was all cultivated. The Italians [of that generation] did not come here to stay. The average one came to make money and go home. But then when my father's generation came, their idea was to stay.

AUDREY: So your grandfather came here, worked in the vegetable garden and, like his father, went back to Italy. And then your father was born after



he [your grandfather] returned to Italy. I'm guessing when your great-grandfather came, it would have been 1849 or 1850. When your grandfather came, it may have been the 1880s.

INES: Yes. And then my father came in 1902. And Mama in 1906.

AUDREY: And when your father came, unlike his father and grandfather, he came with the intention to stay. Because he did not want to go back to the Italian Army?

INES: Well no, he wouldn't have had to go back to the Army. There just wasn't any work. When he was released [from the Army], my grandfather had a family of five -- three daughters and two sons. There was nothing up on top of that hill for them. What could they do? Some of the people who were in the lowlands had wheat and corn and stuff like that, but what could you grow up on that hill? In fact, when we went back in '29, my oldest brother said to my father [laugh], "Whatever you do, don't leave it to me." That's how it was up there. My children went to see it. And the family who bought it from my father is still there -- they had so many children that Mussolini gave them a prize!

AUDREY: Now why did your father inherit it if he was the one who came here? Why didn't the other children inherit it?

INES: They didn't want it. The girls, the three sisters, all got dowries; they had nothing to do with land itself, see. The land was left to the two boys -- my uncle and Papa. And then they sold it after so many years.





AUDREY: So, just to understand the differences . . . were the people who lived on the lowlands and had land that they could cultivate, were they considered sort of . . .

INES: Yes, maybe they had a little more money because of they grew, they could sell . . . Of course Papa said his family had wine grapes and fava beans -- which he said he ate so many he turned green! And see they had a way of -- the grandparents ate first when they had dinner. Then, mother and father. The kids always ate last. Here in America the kids eat first.

AUDREY: Why didn't they eat together?

INES: I don't know. Just their system. Papa always said, he said, "My grandparents ate first, then my parents, and we ate last." Of course they didn't have that much to eat I suppose. It was mostly polenta and beans, and they grew vegetables up there.

AUDREY: Maybe they didn't have room for everybody to sit down at once!

INES: [Laugh] I'm pretty sure it must have been that!

AUDREY: Getting back to the story of your first visit to Italy in 1929, did your father go as well with you?

INES: Yes. All five of us went.

AUDREY: How did your family manage financially? Did he give up his work here?



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AUDREY: How did your family manage financially? Did he give up his work here?



INES: Yes. He had sort of semi-retired, and I guess we were what you would call comfortable. But when we were on our way home on the high seas, the bottom fell out of everything: the Crash came [1929]. And my brother telegraphed my father, "What shall I do?" and Papa telegraphed him back and said, "Don't do anything." And it was just like starting over again, but they had the house and they had saved. Of course they had quite a bit of Bank of Italy [stock] at the time, too. That didn't help. But it came back.

AUDREY: What did your father do?

INES: My father was a garbage man. When he first came here [from Italy] he worked for the Torre Company, which was a salvage firm -- recycling stuff, paper and sacks and rags, stuff like that.

AUDREY: Were they related to the Torres we were talking about earlier?

INES: They might have been related, see. The Torres of that family [the Torre Company] were more schooled, let's put it. One of them became a dentist. But they had this salvage company and Papa worked for them for awhile. And he got a dollar a day. And they wanted Papa to stay with them, but he didn't want to do that. He wanted to go on his own. So when he had saved enough money to get his own horse and the wagon -- he was very familiar with horses because he was in the mountain artillery in Italy -- that's how he got started. One thing he said the Army taught him -- how to handle a horse. One of the benefits of *that* college! [Laugh] And then . . . oh there was a lot of competition. In fact, one story he always told . . . You know [there was] a store on Geary Street called Nathan Dorman, and they



had all beautiful crystal and dishes, and Papa had them as a customer. And one day Papa said he saw this big box outside -- a crate; and he looked inside and he saw what he thought was glass (he didn't know anything about crystal). And he went upstairs and told Mr. Dorman about it. Apparently someone had broken it open and taken some pieces. And he never forgot Papa, and whenever Papa asked him for a raise, he gave it to him without question. Little things like that. And Papa was here during the earthquake.

AUDREY: You said he came to this country in 1902. Was that when he worked for the salvage company?

INES: Yes, the Torre Company. I don't know how long he worked for them, and then he went to . . . when he had money, I guess he bought his own horse and wagon, or got together with other people, I imagine.

AUDREY: And then he started his own company. What was the name of it?

INES: Well they called it, let's see, the Scavengers' Protective Union -- isn't that an awful name to give something? It sounds like a . . . I don't know how to describe it. Now it's called . . . my son works for the Sunset Scavenger Company.

AUDREY: Is that the same company? It got sold?

INES: Well they are now. They got together. But it was called the Scavengers' Protective at one time. Now my son is ready to retire. He's about had it.





AUDREY: Does any member of the family still own a part of the company?

INES: He does. He's a shareholder. And my grandson is working for them too now. I don't know how they worked that out, but if you are a shareholder there are so many more benefits. So he's done well, but he's getting tired now.

AUDREY: So it didn't take your father very long, then, to . . .

INES: No, I guess they saved their money, and I guess those boarding houses didn't cost very much. And, you know, maybe they paid part of it and gradually paid it off.

AUDREY: Because your parents were married in 1908. So that means he was just here for six years before they got married.

INES: He was here six years.

AUDREY: And already had his own company.

INES: Yes. He had his own horse and wagon. In fact, you know where Safeway used to be, on Chestnut Street and Columbus, now there are apartments? That's where their stable used to be.

AUDREY: So we're talking about the east side of Columbus, on Chestnut . . .

INES: Yes, where Powell and Mason come together.







St. Brigid's Church After the 1906 Earthquake  
(The School Ines Attended is to the Right of the Church)

And Mama got here [from Italy] in 1906, three days before the earthquake. Twenty-one years old! Mama said they had fireworks special for her! [Laugh]

AUDREY: She was only twenty-one?

INES: She was about twenty-one. And she was supposed to stay with these friends who had given up on her coming in. Evidently the trains took a long time to come across the country. And she said, "Luckily this nice man with a horse and wagon took me up to their house. He could have taken me to Pacific Avenue. Nobody would have known." [Laugh] So when the fire broke out . . . well the earthquake, and then when the fire broke out they had to leave.

AUDREY: Where were they?

INES: They were on Clay: Clay and Mason. They were up on the hill near the Fairmont Hotel.

So she stayed with them (the Peiranos). My uncles, who lived in Healdsburg (they had ranches up there) were to come and get her and bring her up there, but they couldn't come in [because of the fire]. They [the Army] wouldn't let them in. And Papa [during the earthquake] was out with the horse and wagon and he saw the old Call Building, they called it. It had a tower and he saw it wiggling back and forth. But the horse felt it first, and he said "The only way I could stop him was to go up a hill." Animals are very prone to . . .

AUDREY: What did the horse do?



INES: It just shook. Buildings fell. I guess they weren't built all that good.

AUDREY: Where was your father at that point?

INES: He was down around Montgomery and one of the cross streets there, say California. Downtown. He saw the Call Building. That was like a tower. The Call was a newspaper. And then the Call became the Chronicle and the Examiner. See there were about five newspapers in San Francisco at the time.

AUDREY: So he got the horse to go up a hill and that way he could control him?

INES: Yes, to stop him.

AUDREY: But your parents hadn't met yet at this point?

INES: No. In fact, after the earthquake and fire Mama did eventually go to Healdsburg. She was not very happy up there. Her sister-in-law was kind of bossy, and my mother worked in a French laundry, and she said, "They fed me swill." That's the way she used to put it. And my aunt was had the three children. And my mother could have stayed in Italy and been better off. So her uncle said to her one day, he said, "You know the girls down...", the two sisters who lived down in San Francisco on Clay Street -- the Peirano family she had originally stayed with, well their girls worked for a tailor called The Baron. Mama always said they called him The Baron. God knows what his name was. And he did tailoring for very wealthy people, the lah--di--dah









**Giovanni Molinari and Rose Cuneo (left)  
Wedding Photo, c. 1908**

ladies, society, you know. And they needed a girl to hem. So Mama came down [to San Francisco], and she stayed with the Peiranos. My mother always told the story about when she worked for The Baron -- well, they wore corsets. And sometimes they didn't tighten them enough and they'd have to let the dress out. Then they'd come back and have to alter it, pull it in again.

And my father's brother Paul saw my mother on the cable car with her two girlfriends, and he said, "So and so from so and so is here." Papa went up there and that's what started that romance [laugh]. In fact, Mrs. Peirano, she was a real rascal. I once remember when we went up there, she'd say, "You sit there." And we didn't move an ear! And then when we left she gave us an orange. In those days that was like a big piece of candy. But when my mother first went to live with them she said to my mother, she said, "You know it looks like Johnny's kind of interested in you. Do you want me to say something?" She [Ines' mother] said, "Oh we're already engaged." [laughing].

AUDREY: So the Peirano family introduced your parents.

INES: Yes. This is Mama's wedding picture. And this is one of the Peirano girls. And that's my Uncle John (my mother's brother) from Healdsburg. And they made their own dresses. They worked for that tailor [the Baron] I was telling you about. And Mama was a hemmer. Look at the hats! I love those hats. I still have the blouse in my "hopeless chest"! [Laugh]

AUDREY: Looking at the way they're dressed, it's hard to believe they were poor.



INES: Well, these people [the Peiranos] were well off. I think her father worked in the commission market -- you know, fruits and vegetables. And he already was here a long enough time and had his own house with flats up near the Fairmont. And the girls were Americanized. Very much so, you know. They knew their way around. But my parents worked very hard; Mama made her own dress. And, of course, when they got married they "put it on", you know. In fact, Papa said he only had a couple of dollars the day they got married. But that was their day and he made sure he had a good suit.

AUDREY: So the Peiranos were from the same area of Italy as . . .

INES: They were from my father's side of the mountain. In fact, when Mama and Papa got married, my mother had received a letter from her mother, and her mother said, "To marry someone from that side of the hill, you could have stayed here." And my father read it. Oh he never forgot it. So we were back in Italy in '29 and he and my grandmother got into an argument. It was the funniest thing.

AUDREY: Your grandmother didn't think that someone from that side of the mountain was...

INES: She figured that he wasn't good enough for a Cuneo. I guess there were stories about different people . . . maybe some ancestor had been a rascal and they figured they all were.

AUDREY: She would have preferred your mother to marry someone who came from their side of the mountain?



INES: In other words, yes, somebody from Italy, but not from Papa's side of the mountain.

AUDREY: Even though it's very close.

INES: They were practically, say, a couple of miles.

AUDREY: Your Mama apparently stayed very good friends with the Peiranos after she . . .

INES: Yes. The Peiranos were actually related more on my father's side.

AUDREY: Well how did she know them, then, before she came from Italy?

INES: I have no idea. Evidently my uncles may have known them, because she didn't know my dad at all, unless they saw one another at church or something like that.

AUDREY: Just to go back for a minute, you said your mom landed in New York and took the train across the country by herself in 1906 at the age of twenty or twenty-one. That was pretty brave.

INES: Yes. I think so. But they were a big family over there and she had, what, four sisters and four brothers, and I guess maybe it was the trend in those days to come over.

AUDREY: Was it unusual for a woman to travel by herself?





INES: That's how they all got here.

AUDREY: By themselves?

INES: Yes, and sometimes some of the men would send for their wives. You know, someone they knew back there. And that's how a lot of them came. Because the girls here would not marry a "banana-boater" -- that's the expression they used. They wanted to marry an American, not someone from Italy -- especially the girls who were born here. They looked down on a foreigner like my father, see. So the minute a girl came from Italy, everybody was interested. Because there weren't that many girls, I guess, floating around at that time.

AUDREY: And how about ones like your mom?

INES: Well she was different. She was from Italy, and that's how she, you know, it worked.

AUDREY: OK, so the American girls weren't interested in the immigrant men.

INES: No. They called them banana--boaters. That's the expression they used.

AUDREY: And when your Mama got off the train, and then, I guess the ferry, she found a nice man with a horse and buggy.

INES: See they were supposed to pick her up. She gets off the ferry boat, you know, from Oakland and they had given up on her.



AUDREY: Because she was so late?

INES: Yes. So this man with the horse and wagon took her up there to the Peiranos.

AUDREY: Now you said earlier that he could have taken her to Pacific Avenue. What was that?

INES: That was like the Tenderloin. In other words, it was, what would you call it? Prostitutes and . . .

AUDREY: A red light district?

INES: A red light district. Yes.

AUDREY: And that was right here on Pacific?

INES: Yes it was right down here. It started at Columbus and it went all the way down to the Ferry Building, practically.

AUDREY: OK, so that was the Barbary Coast sector.

INES: Yes. That was it.

AUDREY: Interesting. It's so different now.

INES: Isn't it! Yes. Well they said San Francisco was pretty rough at the



time, but they managed.

AUDREY: Your mom must have had some earthquake stories. Do you remember any?

INES: Yes, well she said when the fire broke out they moved out to the Avenues. Evidently these Peiranos must have had somebody out there. Now Rino's [Ines' husband] family -- his grandmother --they landed in the Presidio. And Mrs. Belli [Ines' mother-in-law] was about eighteen years old at that time. And then, little by little, they had property; they came back. Some of it was damaged; some of it wasn't. Now I know it [the earthquake and fire] was here, because when the lot next door was empty, you could still see bricks where the stairs were.

AUDREY: So you grew up, then, in North Beach, and that was your neighborhood.

INES: Yes. It's always been. Now I understand that this part, from Mason up, is called Russian Hill. Now I don't know. I don't say anything, because some people think North Beach is for the birds, but I've always been proud of living here. It didn't matter to me [laughing]. And I got married here.

AUDREY: Let's see, how old were you when your father built this house here on Union Street?

INES: Let's see, I was born in 1915, and he built it in 1918.

AUDREY: So you were just three years old? And you've been in this house



since you were three!

INES: Yes. Well maybe four or five. The reason that we moved was my brothers were the only boys on the block on Lombard Street, and there was a big yard between the two houses [the one in the rear of the lot occupied by Ines' family and the one in the front with the rented flats]. And everybody else had daughters, and they would come into the yard to play. Well, you know, I guess the boys teased them or something and they'd go home and [complain] -- they called my brother Bacci at the time as a nickname -- and so my mother said to my uncle one day, she said, "The lower flat in the front is empty and I'm going to move there, seeing as I have the boys. It's logical, you know to go in the lower flat." And my uncle said, "If you do move there, I'll put a match to the place."

AUDREY: Why did he say that?

INES: Well, I don't know. My uncle was a funny guy. And so then my mother said to my father, "The flat on Union Street in the middle [second floor] is empty." See Papa had it built to make money. And he said, "Oh what about my wine?" and she said, "I don't care about your wine, but I'm going to be there tomorrow. I've had it. Every time that something goes wrong, the boys get blamed, and they're not always to blame." So anyway, at that time, the moving vans were all around the park down here, see. [It was customary for moving trucks to line up around Washington Square waiting for customers.] Papa went and got the . . . [truck] and the next day we were here.

AUDREY: And this house was the way it is now? Was it always three flats?





INES: Yes. Three flats. So I've been here ever since.

AUDREY: So she [your mother] wanted to move because your brothers were getting blamed?

INES: Well they were getting blamed for everything and my aunt and uncle were very fussy people and they just had the one daughter. And, I don't know . . . Mama was a very, very pleasant person, she never got angry. But when she did, she didn't say much, but it worked.

AUDREY: That's a beautiful story. I mean she was standing up for her kids.

INES: And that's how we got here, which was nice. They were no more mischievous than anyone else.

AUDREY: You said earlier that they called your brother Bacci.

INES: Yes , that was a nickname. See my brother is Giovanni Battista. And Bacci is a nickname for Battista. And then when he went to school up on the top of Telegraph Hill [Garfield School], where he started, the teacher said, "That can't be your name. Will you bring your mother?" So Mama went up there and said, "It's really John." [Laugh] But we always called him Bacci. And the Italians say, *Baccicin*, like a miniature Bacci. And when he met his wife, she put a stop to it: "No more Bacci. It's John." [Laugh] She wouldn't call him that. She'd have a fit. But see the folks, you know how nicknames stick to people. So we called him that until he met his wife.

AUDREY: Now tell me again, if you will, the arrangement on Lombard



Street. Your father and his brother . . .

INES: My father and his brother built the two flats together on the rear portion of the lot.

AUDREY: And they lived there. And then your mom wanted to move to one of the flats that had later been built on the front of the lot?

INES: Yes. When they got a little bit of money as an investment, they built the three flats in the front, and it was a big yard in between. And she wanted to move into the lower flat. They only had four rooms where they had been living [in the back property]. Also, she had her uncle living there, and whenever somebody came from Italy -- you can imagine all of us in four rooms!

AUDREY: So your uncle didn't want her there [in the front flats] because he wanted to rent it out?

INES: Yes, well he thought the boys would ruin the place, I guess. He thought they were destructive.

AUDREY: And this place [here on Union Street] was not in partnership with you uncle? It was all your father's?

INES: Right. And then they sold the place on Lombard Street and my uncle moved up to Leavenworth. I've been here ever since.

AUDREY: Just talking about your brothers when they were young reminded



me of a story you told me about your sons when they were starting school -  
- something about the name Belli?

INES: Oh yes. My oldest son, when he was going to school, they used to tease him. They called him "Leon Belly Button". [Laugh] [The Italian pronunciation of Belli is Bel-lee.] So I said, "Well, if it's gonna be such a hassle, say it's Belli [Bel-lie]," which is wrong but . . . You know the attorney [Melvyn Belli -- not a relative], if you called him Bel-lee he wouldn't even answer you.

AUDREY: So that's how the pronunciation Bel-lie stuck.  
Just to go back a bit, when you were talking about the little place on Lombard Street which had four rooms you said that your mother had *her* uncle living there.

INES: Yes, she had her uncle who was from Jackson. He used to have a grocery store up in the Gold Country in Jackson. And when he retired he came to live with Mama. He would have been a Cuneo.

AUDREY: Oh, her father's brother?

INES: Yes. She took care of him. I never knew him. He died before I was born. But he was very attached to my oldest brother. He used to take him out to Golden Gate Park. At that time they had the little donkeys. I remember. I even went. They had a little corral and they put the kids on the donkeys and they'd go around in a circle. Yes, in Golden Gate Park. Oh this is so far back [laugh]. I just vaguely remember it. But John [her brother] would remember it even more.







1921 - Sarah B. Cooper School  
(Ines is 4th from left, top row, with book)



AUDREY: Growing up then, were all your friends down the hill? [Towards Washington Square]

INES: Yes, well you made friends. People moved down the block and they were all families with young people, you know. And I went to school at Sarah B. Cooper School, which was down on Jones Street. Now it's named . . . I'm not sure. [Yick Wo Alternative Elementary School] And then from there, I went here: to Hancock. [On Filbert Street near Taylor -- now part of City College of San Francisco.] And then they only went up to sixth grade. And the people who lived in [were renting] this flat here, [at the time Ines' family lived upstairs] they were sending their daughter to Saint Brigid's and that's how I ended up at Saint Brigid's -- so there I had 7th and 8th grade and all through high school.

AUDREY: Saint Brigid's. That's on Van Ness and Broadway?

INES: Yes. My brothers went to Lowell High School, both of them.

AUDREY: When you returned from Italy in 1929, you were 14 years old.

INES: Yes, I think I was about that. I was a freshman in high school. So that would be about right.

AUDREY: And while you were away, the [1929] Crash happened.

INES: We were on the high seas, on the way home, and my brother telegraphed my father, "What shall I do?" . And my father said, "Well we're



almost home; we'll take care of it when we get there." But we stopped in New York (one of my father's cousins passed away) so we stayed there a few extra days. But there was nothing you could do about it [the financial crash] at the time. We took the train and came back to San Francisco.

AUDREY: Do you remember that train trip?

INES: All I can remember is we stopped in Chicago, and we had to take a different train. The ship we went on was the same one we came back on -- The Augustus. There were two ships, they called them sister ships. The other was the Roma.

AUDREY: Do you remember the trip on the ship?

INES: Oh Yes . It was nice, we had nice rooms. Of course, we had bunks, I remember that. We had lots of fun. I was young, about 13, and I met some nice young girls from here. And on the way home we took the same ship and some of the same people were on coming home. But my brothers came before because they had to go back to school.

AUDREY: So you were gone over the summer, I guess.

INES: Yes, we left I think it might have been around May, and I came back with my parents around October 12th. We were on the ship on Columbus Day, I remember that. Isn't it funny how you can remember things like that; and sometimes I can't remember what I did yesterday.

AUDREY: So when you got back to San Francisco, was your life very



different because of the Crash?

INES: To me, no. I was a young girl and I guess having your folks backing you up, it didn't . . . I would say maybe *now* I'd feel it. In that time, the folks were very loyal to A.P. Giannini and most of their money was in the Bank of America and Transamerica.

AUDREY: But it didn't affect your daily lives?

INES: Not particularly. They had the rents [from the flats]; of course in those days they were nothing. And Papa still had some part in the garbage company. I think he went back to work for awhile. And in fact, during the summer, he would take my brothers, put them to work on the garbage truck. He wanted to make *sure* they went to school. He said, "I didn't have the opportunity, but you boys do. I don't care what it costs." You see, Charlie was lucky because he got the scholarship because of playing football. He went to Lowell and then on to Santa Clara. And John worked after school; the boys did that. I don't remember suffering from it [the Depression], that's for sure. Mama knew what to do. She was a great manager. Papa didn't give a hoot what you did with the money. He was not interested in it at all. Mama handled it all the time.

AUDREY: You mean the household money? (INES: Yes.) But did she also handle the investments?

INES: No. Papa did usually. But I always remember my father decided to put some money away in case another crash came. So he puts it in a tin box in the basement; I think it was \$500 in paper money. Many years later he gets



the box out and it [the money] had turned to mush. From the condensation. So he took it down to Mr. what's--his--name at the bank, and they got the biggest kick out of it. They wanted to know if he had more hidden down there! [Laugh] They sent it back to the Treasury Department and they were able to ferret out how much (it's got linen in it, I think) . . . and he got his money back! I guess it was damp in the basement, you see, and the condensation . . . oh Papa got teased for years! All these Italians were great at hiding money away. See they had gotten stung once and they didn't want to get stung again. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if there are boxes hidden out there in all those backyards we see from this window. [Laugh] And then they die and nobody knows it's there.

AUDREY: When you were a teenager, what did you do for fun?

INES: Well, let's see, I went to church a lot. There were the nuns there and they had sewing classes and then we had little plays and all that sort of stuff. And we were tied in with the Church quite a bit. And then we played outside. You know, made up our own . . . The lots were empty and we kind of ran wild. And I grew up with Virginia who became my sister-in-law. She was a little bit younger than I.

AUDREY: Was this block mostly Italian too?

INES: Well my cousins, the Molinaris, they lived on the corner of the alley [Marion Place]; that house is now owned by the Manas. Next door was Torregino, they came in later, though. That was built way after ours; in fact, that was the last one on the block. She's gone now. And this one [Ines's building] was built in 1918. And next door [to the east] were the Garibaldis.





That was built in '29 when we were in Italy. The son owns it now. Then next to Garibaldi there was the Bevilacqua house. Then there's the Torres (where my friend Madeline lives), which originally was built by a prize fighter, Joe Roche. That was just his fighting name; he was actually Italian. His real name was Aschero. In those days, you know, I guess Italians weren't quite well looked upon. And the fighters always did take on names. Then the house next to the Torres was my sister--in--law Virginia: the Costas. And her father had a grocery store on the corner of Grant Avenue and Vallejo (there's a hardware store there now). And it was a delightful store. We used to get these big cheeses from Italy, you know. It [the grocery store] was called Costa Brothers. [See page 123 of David Myrick's San Francisco's Telegraph Hill]. Their house was built in 1917. And Mr. Costa died many years ago. Virginia was my girlfriend and she married my brother Charlie. Then the Ratto house. And the Balestreris. And on the corner [Union and Mason], let's see, he was a druggist. His name was Del Monte. And all the way down the street, they were all solid Italians. And across the street the same. And I would say in the blocks below were solid Italian. As you went up the next block [towards Russian Hill] there were some, but not all. You see, in the photograph in this book I've marked all the names of the people who lived in this block.

[Note: Ines is referring to David F. Myrick's book San Francisco's Telegraph Hill. The photo on page 174, taken in the 1930's, shows the E Line streetcar with the entrance in the center of the car. Ines' residence can be seen right behind the streetcar.]

See in the photo the old streetcar that opens in the middle? That streetcar



went all the way down to the ferry. And they had a conductor, who took the money, and a <sup>motor man</sup> matrimony. The <sup>motor man</sup> matrimony was in the front and drove it. The conductor was in the middle here by the door. He had one of those things that you put the money in -- it was stuck onto the floor, like they have now, but it was in the middle of the car and you got on in the middle.

Actually, when we moved here it [the street] was cobblestones. Then they paved it.

AUDREY: Do you remember the sound of the horses on the cobblestones?

INES: Oh yes. And you know when we lived on Lombard Street it was cobblestones and horse and wagon -- most of the merchants had . . . [a horse and wagon]. And when they went down the hill, they braked it by putting the back wheel against the curb so the horse wouldn't slip. You know, cobblestones are slippery. And when we came here it was cobblestones and a couple of years after they put the paving.

AUDREY: So in order to keep the horse from slipping when they went *downhill* . . .?

INES: Yes, when they were going down they used the back wheel and had a way of hitting it [against the curb]. Otherwise the horse could slip.

AUDREY: Do you remember any of the people who sold things [on the street?]

INES: Oh yes. There was one man who used to come, he had a big basket



over his shoulder and he sold fish. And he had a little horn, he'd go tootin' away. And then there was the "rags, sacks and bottles man". And the boys [her brothers] used to sometimes hang on to the back of his wagon and take stuff back. You see, you'd sell stuff to him and then my brothers and some of the kids would grab it and take it away and sell it back again [laugh].

AUDREY: And what did the "rags, sacks and bottles man" do with the stuff?

INES: Well he went to the junkyards and sold it. He made a living with that, see. It was like a business.

AUDREY: What could they do with old rags?

INES: Well, when my father was a garbage man, all newspapers were saved, see. And they sold it back to the paper companies and it was recycled. One of Papa's customers was the Zellerbach Paper Company (I don't know if that still exists). And they had a way of recycling it.

AUDREY: So recycling is nothing new!

INES: The only thing, in those days *everything* was recycled.

AUDREY: So, just to get back to what this block was like when you were young, it seems the Italian section went from Telegraph Hill down into North Beach, and then up to part of this hill?

INES: Yes. And a lot of the fishermen families lived down [near the wharf], you know, because they'd be close to the water. In fact Joe DiMaggio was



born behind that school there [Hancock School, which is on Filbert between Jones and Taylor]. He was born there on Taylor between Filbert and Greenwich.

AUDREY: Did you know him?

INES: No. He was supposed to be in my class, because he lived around the corner. I don't think he liked school [laughing]. And one of his brothers lived on Union Street, and my oldest boy and his son were friends. I met the boy. And then his father got drowned in a fishing accident.

AUDREY: That would have been DiMaggio's brother? Joe's brother?

INES: Yes. The one that lived down here. But I didn't know any of them except, you know, newspapers and stuff like that.

I went to Italian school for six months. In the Fugazi building.

AUDREY: Oh really? Was there a school in there?

INES: Yes. It had Italian teachers. My brothers went, both of them.

AUDREY: And that was started so that the immigrants' children could keep up the language?

INES: Yes. Keep up their Italian heritage. I didn't last very long. I was taking piano lessons, I was making confirmation, and it was a little much. And of course the one thing I wanted to get rid of was the Italian class, I don't know





why. But see my folks made one mistake: they spoke the dialect in the house. But you pick it up, you know, so it's not too bad. So I can't speak it that well, but I understand it.

AUDREY: When you say you can't speak it, you mean Italian or the dialect?

INES: I can speak the dialect, Genovese, very well, and I can speak some Italian, but not very good. They can tell exactly where you came from.

AUDREY: Interesting. So that's what the Fugazi building was originally?

INES: It was a school for quite awhile, and then Mr. Fugazi left it to them. And I think it's some kind of . . . it's subsidized by . . . and they still have that Italian group, which I belonged to at one time, but no more. I don't know what they call it. I forgot . . . Italian Welfare! And if you needed some help in the house, they always had someone who needed a job. My oldest brother was active in it, and I was in it for a while there, and then, you know, you have the children and you just don't have time for that.

AUDREY: So it was a club that was . . . the purpose of it was to help new immigrants coming in?

INES: Yes. They had regular Italian teachers.

AUDREY: And they found jobs for people?

INES: Yes. And then the school was to teach them the Italian language. And my brother John graduated, and so did my brother Charles. But I only went



six months. There was too much going on: I was making confirmation, taking piano lessons, and I was just going in three different directions.

[Note: Fugazi Hall to which Ines refers is located at 678 Green Street. Its official name is "Casa Coloniale Italiana J. F. Fugazi". Built in 1913 by Mr. Fugazi as a community center, it housed the Italian Chamber of Commerce, the Immigrants' Aid Committee, the Italian School, the Dante Alighieri Society, the Italian Touring Club, the Italian Mutual Benevolent Society, and the Italian Workingmen's Mutual Aid Society. After America's entry into World War II, the school was permanently shut down and the Dante Alighieri Society here was dissolved. The Italian-American Community Services Agency now occupies a portion of the building. A bilingual staff provides personalized service to many -- particularly seniors. In addition to housing the Agency, which is funded by private donations, the building has a research library and museum, as well as private meeting rooms which are used by various Italian clubs. Fugazi Hall is also the site of San Francisco's famous long-running show *Beach Blanket Babylon*.]

AUDREY: Did you go on to college?

INES: No. I went to work.

AUDREY: What did you do?

INES: I was a secretary and I worked for Northern Warren Corporation. It was a nail polish and cosmetic company. And I was there until I went to work for a



real estate firm out in the Mission, and then I met my husband and I worked for another year or so.

AUDREY: Northern Warren Company?

INES: Yes. They were from New York. It was a big company, and all the beauty parlors used to use their products.

We had relatives up in Healdsburg -- they all had ranches and sometimes I'd spend summer vacations up there: pick prunes. My aunt's house still exists. It's a pizza restaurant now, but it was a nice house. It was not in town because they had a ranch. And next to her was my mother's aunt, Mrs. Gagliardo, they had a ranch. Mostly prunes, that was their big thing. And they had the driers where they dried them -- to make dried prunes. They were run by electricity or gas. It heated them up and shrunk 'em. If they had sun, they'd put 'em outside and dry them naturally.

AUDREY: What did the driers look like?

INES: All I can remember is the trays that they put 'em on. Other than that, the drier, it was kind of a building. I had an uncle that lived outside of Healdsburg in a place called Dry Creek. And now it's all grapes. The wine has become so valuable. I still have cousins up in Dry Creek. In fact we might go up there. The boys [her sons] want to take me up there because I spent summer vacations up there. My aunt was great for Italian beans. I think we had them for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Before I went away for the summer, I was too small to reach the faucet in the kitchen here; and when I went to my aunt's, she would say, "Eat the beans, you'll grow tall!"



And when I came back [after the summer] I could reach the faucet! I really fell for that lie [laugh]. My mother said, "Lala [aunt in Genovese] was right." [Laugh] And they used to make ice cream in the basement. They had that thing [ice cream maker] to make it the old-fashioned way. And they had orange trees I remember.

So my sons want to take me to the restaurant [the pizza place which was once her aunt's house]. All the relatives are dead now. But my sons have been to the restaurant and they say that around the fireplace there are still all these old photographs of the Cuneo family [even though the restaurant owners are not relatives], and they say I'm in one of them! It was such a nice house. They were kind of well off. They had a big touring car -- very few people had cars. And every time we went out for a ride we got a flat tire. I always remember that.

And they had a windmill for the water, for irrigating. And we used to go swimming in the Russian River, right behind the house. And my aunt would say, "You go help your cousins pick prunes." When the prunes drop, you pick them -- not from the tree, you pick them from the ground. Of course it was lousy work because you'd scratch your knees. And then, when it got too hot, she'd say, "You can go in swimming." And we'd stay in the water until we got all puckered up. And then Lala had the bread maker, the big cement bread baker outside. In those days, that's what they had. And you'd put the bread in with a long-handled paddle, and they had the fire underneath. And she'd make the best bread. And then she'd make her own prosciutto.

AUDREY: So the bread oven was outdoors?





INES: It was outdoors. And it was made of cement and the fire was underneath. I don't know how they did it. And each girl had a chore, and one of them was to go feed the chickens. Well, when you have to do it you don't like doing it. So I loved to do it; I'm the city girl, I loved to feed the chickens [laugh]. And go pick the eggs up. It was kinda fun. It was a nice time to grow up really [said with some emotion].

AUDREY: And you'd go without your parents?

INES: Yes. Sometimes I'd take the train and they'd pick me up at the station. There was a train at that time all the way to Healdsburg. You'd take the ferry boat across to Marin County at Sausalito. And the train was there and it stopped all the way up. I think the tracks are still there. They'd get me on the train and then my aunt would pick me up at the station. Made you feel so grown up [laugh]. [Sigh] I think the children miss a lot of that today.

AUDREY: How old were you when you were spending summers up there?

INES: I'd say about six years old. Five or six. She was my godmother, and every time she came to visit, she'd give me a silver dollar. But he [her aunt's husband] died young; he had leukemia. He died about 1928.

AUDREY: How did she manage then, without him.

INES: Well they managed but not too well.

AUDREY: What do you remember about Washington Square?



INES: Well . . . the Church used to have their bazaars. And they used to have it in the Square, and then everybody got a little excited, I guess, about the trees and bushes, so they put it in the schoolyard.

AUDREY: You said you went to catechism in the old Saints Peter and Paul?  
[Then on the corner of Filbert and Grant.]

INES: Yes. I started up there.

AUDREY: So they kept that even though they had the new Church on Washington Square?

INES: Yes. But they just had . . . they had taken the altar and stuff out [of the old Church], and then the Church was in the basement. They hadn't [yet] built above. It was where the basement would be now, with the boys club. And then gradually they built up above.

AUDREY: And so while they were in the process of building they used both buildings, then? One for catechism . . .

INES: Yes. I made communion in the basement of the new Church. But we used to go up there [to the old one] for catechism.

AUDREY: Did you ever go to the movies there at the Palace?

INES: We went to the Milano [before it became the Palace]. And we'd go Saturday afternoons, or sometimes Sunday, and stay for maybe . . . see the



same thing over three or four times. And there was an ice cream store next door: Bosso's it was called. And his son would come into the theater, and he had this sort of covered thing with the handle, and it had the cones in there. So as he came by, you paid for your cone. And then they had popcorn. And sometimes we stayed all afternoon and saw the same thing over and over again. [Laugh] Isn't that awful!

AUDREY: Do you remember any of the movies?

INES: Oh God no. I don't think so. [Laugh] And then there was an old theater on Green, called the Flag [next to the mortuary]. I think it was where the flower shop is now. And I remember going there a few times. All I can remember of there, 'cause see in those days you went to see a picture and then you went the next week to see the serials -- mostly cowboys -- and I remember going there a few times.

AUDREY: So what age, then, were you when you were doing that: going to the movies?

INES: Oh I was probably about five and six. My brothers would drag me. My mother'd say, "Take your sister with you." And every Saturday we went to the show. It was one of the things to do.

AUDREY: When you got older -- say to be 13 or 14 -- did you go with girlfriends?

INES: Yes. My [future] sister-in-law lived down the street, and we'd go down together. And then there were several on Polk Street. There was the



Alhambra and the Royal: they're both closed now.

AUDREY: Did your parents have any problem with you going out alone with a girlfriend?

INES: No at that time there wasn't a problem. You know, we played out in the street . . . it was as safe as . . . our back doors were never closed. The flat doors inside -- never locked. Never. My side door now [service entrance], you have to put a special lock on it. And the garbage man has a key and PG & E, but in those days everything was open. And even after I was married and I lived here, my back door was never locked -- the one out on the street [meaning service entrance]. You see, from the service entrance you could go upstairs to the back door of each flat. And the doors were always open. Even when I was married and lived here. Mama and I would run up and down and no one closed their doors. But boy has it changed! It got to be a little different. We were as free as air; let's put it that way. It's a good feeling too. Now you have to be so careful, everything has to be double-locked.

And everybody had a hanging roof. You took your great big basket full of wet clothes and go up three flights and go inside the picket [enclosure]. And then we had the cords and you'd hang everything -- diapers, everything. No one had driers. They weren't even heard of.

AUDREY: So you'd go up to the roof, and the picket fence enclosures were for safety?

INES: Yes, and the clotheslines went across to those tall posts, and they were on pulleys. And Papa had fixed the roof so nice he even had his herbs





growing up there. Because they needed that warm sun. And he had glass around. I used to take the children up there all the time to play. It was very safe.

AUDREY: And was all the washing done by hand?

INES: First it was by hand. And I even washed the diapers by hand for awhile. And then you took 'em up to the roof to dry. And to this day people still wish they could put them out because that air gives everything such a nice smell. Then Mama got a washing machine -- the old fashioned kind with the wringer.

AUDREY: Was it an electric wringer?

INES: No, it was by hand.

Audrey: Where was the washing machine located?

INES: In the back porch, off the kitchen. And then later on, Mama never did have a drier, I was the first one to get the drier. And my drier is in the little room which I call the cat's room. And the stocking that picks up the lint is downstairs in the garage.

Audrey: So which flat did you and your family live in?

INES: In the middle. See, there are three flats and then a little apartment downstairs.

Audrey: So your father and mother chose the middle flat.



INES: Well you know why, it was empty. See, that's when my brothers were always in mischief and Mama said, "Look, the flat on Union Street is empty. I intend to be there tomorrow." And see the moving vans were all around the Park [Washington Square] down here. There was no traffic and no cars in those days. And that's how we got here.

Audrey: Were the moving vans horse-drawn?

INES: No. They were trucks. And they parked them there at the Square. They didn't have any garages. And they were all run by individuals. You know, it was not like a corporation like they do now. Each man just waited there until someone said, "I need a moving man." And also they had the grocery men, with the horse and wagon first, and then the trucks, where you bought your groceries from. Fruits and vegetables. They used to hang around the park. They had fresh every day and maybe it was a little cheaper [than the grocery store]. I don't know.

Audrey: Then when you married, did you and your husband stay in this building?

INES: No. We moved to an apartment up on Taylor Street. We were there for a couple of years. And then my brother John, who lived here, they bought a house on Lombard Street, and my mother said, "Why don't you come here?" I was pregnant at the time and she thought it might work out. And I've been here ever since [the first floor flat]. Leon [her son] is 60 years old, so that's how long I've been here -- not including the years before I was married, when I was growing up. And my husband's property is over on



Fillmore and Jackson. That's where his father had a grocery store. Now it's coffee houses and I don't know what else. And my youngest lives there, Paul.

AUDREY: What about wine-making? Did your father . . .

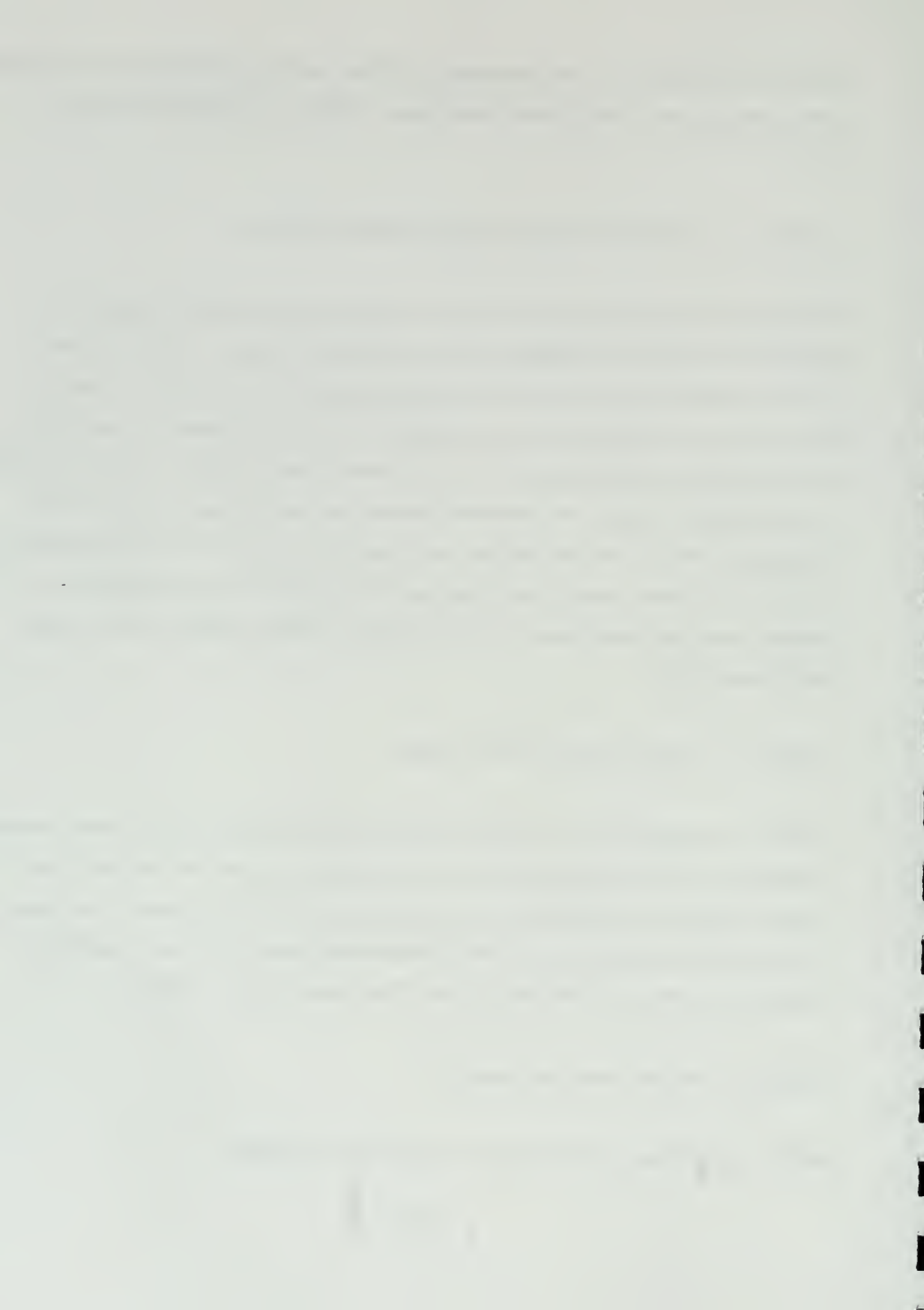
INES: Papa made wine, yes. How they worked it was, all their friends and partners in business or relatives, they would take turns. They'd all come here and make the wine. Then the next person that was going to make it, they'd all go to his house. And my mother and my aunts and all would make food and bring it down. Papa had a table down there and they'd eat while they were making the wine. For instance, when the wine season came, around September, they'd help my father, and maybe the next week they'd help my uncle, and the next week they'd help somebody else. They all helped one another. And you could smell the wine [laugh] in the neighborhood. It was really something.

AUDREY: Did you like it? Was it good?

INES: I never drank it at all. I think maybe now I'll have a glass of white wine occasionally, but I never cared for it that much. And see my uncles all had grape ranches up in Healdsburg, so Papa used to get the grapes from them. And I always remember when the trucks would come, the boys, especially, would get in the back and steal some. They used to call it "fugie."

AUDREY: What does that mean?

INES: I don't know. It was just an expression they used.



AUDREY: To steal the grapes?

INES: Yes. Something like that. [When we were] on Lombard Street too. They were all making their wine. And then of course Prohibition came and that settled that. Then you were allowed to make only for your own use.

AUDREY: So before that they'd made it and sold it?

INES: The wine? No. They never sold it. They made it for their own use.

AUDREY: So even during Prohibition you could make it for your own use?

INES: Yes, but you couldn't sell it, and you were only allowed so many gallons.

AUDREY: So the trucks would come with the grapes and they'd unload them and put them in the basement?

INES: They would bring them into the . . . we have a little back yard. And then Papa had a little gate, like an opening with a screen, and they had a board, like a board with sides to it, and it would go down -- they'd crush it up here. They had a crusher. It crushed the grapes.

AUDREY: Was it just a small thing?

INES: No it was maybe something like this [gestures to something] and on legs . . .





AUDREY: Outside in the yard?

INES: Yes in the yard. And it would go down this opening and there was like a big board with sides, and it would go right into the big vat, and then it would ferment in there. And when it was time, then little by little, it would stream out of this sort of a little outside railing into a vat. And then they'd put it in the barrels. And then I think they let it stay there for a length of time to age it and I don't know . . . I'm not a wine maker, though my oldest boy makes wine downstairs once in awhile.

AUDREY: Still?

INES: There's still some of Papa's equipment there.

AUDREY: Really? How nice.

INES: In fact, do you like wine?

AUDREY: I love wine.

INES: I'll give you a bottle of his. He's very proud of it.

AUDREY: Thank you! So this big vat, just how big was it?

INES: Oh it was tremendous. I'd say it was . . . could hardly fit in this room. Not quite as big. I don't know how to describe it. Say maybe from the clock to the edge of the sofa there.



AUDREY: OK, so that's about 10 feet.

INES: It was very high and it was made of wood.

AUDREY: How did they get it in there?

INES: Piece by piece. It was in pieces, and then they'd have the metal staves around it to hold it together, see. They put it up gradually, and then at the bottom it had like a cuff, and that's where the wine would go into, and then it would drop into a barrel, and then they'd put it in the regular barrels. And then they squeezed it after awhile, the leavings. They put it in this, oh I don't know what you call it, it's a round thing with open slats and it had a thing [which you moved] back and forth, and it gradually went down and squeezed what was left of the mash. They didn't waste anything. And then Papa would put the mash in the garden; he used it as fertilizer. So Leon [Ines' son] is making it now. Usually when it comes now they get it crushed already, so it's easier to work, but there's three flights of stairs to go down there. And he made up some kind of a pipe . . . of course the big barrel is gone. Some friend of my father's wanted it to make a hot tub, so he took it apart, gave Papa \$50, took it apart, brought it up all those stairs, and he drops dead the next day. I always remember that.

AUDREY: So when your son makes wine now, he just has smaller barrels?

INES: Yes. He has maybe about six barrels. And the mash . . . they put the mash in that press, as you call it, and they squeeze it out, and gradually . . . you know, they do a good job.



AUDREY: So the purpose of the big vat, then, the initial...

INES: Was to let it ferment.

AUDREY: OK, so why couldn't they do that in small barrels?

INES: They could have, probably, but they made so much at the time. Because most of our friends that had cellars here in North Beach had the same thing. Well I guess they made such a volume of it, and then leaving it to stay there to ferment and then it would gradually come out. And then they would take the mash out and put it in the press, and, little by little, squeeze what was left. At least I *think* that's how [it was done]. [Laugh]

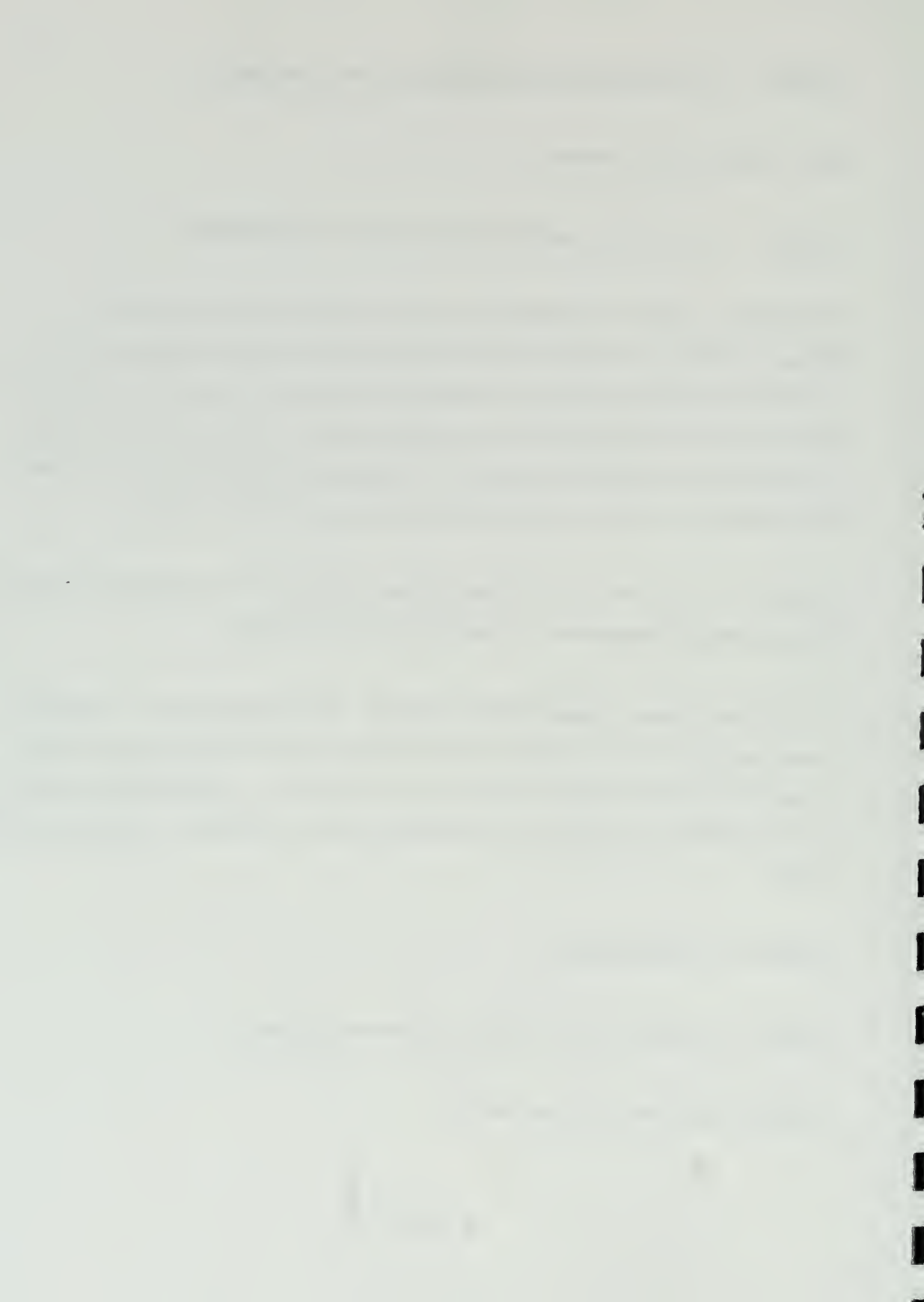
AUDREY: Now here are all these different Italians from different walks of life, but they all knew how to make wine. Why was that?

INES: I don't know. I guess in Italy they did. And it was there . . . Papa and Mama had wine on the table for lunch and for dinner. And my mother had a glass all the time, and Papa did too. It was a part of . . . like maybe we have a cup of coffee or a Coca Cola, or something, they had wine . . . that was their thing.

AUDREY: It was like food?

INES: It was a part of their culture, as we would put it.

AUDREY: But *you* didn't get into it?



INES: I never cared for it that much. Once in a while they'd have some sweet wine. One thing that they did that we kids used to sneak and get them: they would put up cherries, the white cherries, in brandy. And you know they have a certain sweetness to them, and we'd sneak them. And they were good. And you had to be careful, because they were powerful. You could get feeling pretty good off them. [Laugh] But when they weren't looking, we always . . . my brothers did too. They were good. And every year they'd put them up in the brandy. Like if they had company, they served them as sort of an aperitif.

AUDREY: What do you remember about meals?

INES: Meals? Mama was a good cook. For breakfast, we always had a loaf of French bread, and it was brought to the door -- delivered. And it was not wrapped: a big long French bread leaning against the marble. I guess no one worried about germs or anything. And we sliced that and toasted it and put butter, and that was breakfast. We didn't have cereal or anything like that.

And then for lunch, they always had a big lunch like in Italy. So she [Mama] made polenta and dried codfish.

AUDREY: Is that what is called baccala?

INES: Baccala. In fact, she used to send me down to the Cafferata's store on the corner of Columbus and Filbert. And Mama would send me down and she'd say, "Be sure it's nice and white." So Mrs. Cafferata made raviolis there and of course there was flour all over the place. And she'd have two big tubs outside: one was baccala and one was stocko fish. And Mama'd say "Be sure





it's nice and white". So I would tell Mrs. Cafferata and she would pick out a nice piece. And she didn't care if it was dripping -- she dripped all the way, and there was flour on the floor. [Laugh] Then when she went to make change -- she didn't have a cash register -- she opened one of the bins and had a paper bag and she got change out of there. I'll always remember that. [Laugh] No one robbed you or anything.

AUDREY: Now what was the other kind of fish: baccala and?

INES: Stocko fish. S-T-O-C-K-O. Most of it came from the Netherlands; you know they have an awful lot of that dried fish.

AUDREY: So these were both dried fish?

INES: They were both dried fish.

AUDREY: But they were in water?

INES: They put them in water to soak them -- to soften them up.

AUDREY: To prepare them for selling, then?

INES: Yes, and then they would boil it with olive oil, and Mama sometimes would slice potatoes in it or some green beans, or she'd make a torta of Swiss chard and ravioli. She made them, I'd think, until they came out of her ears.

AUDREY: That's a wonderful story about Mrs. Cafferata.



INES: She didn't care; you could see the water, and you know flour and water . . . what a mess it makes! [laughing]

AUDREY: And probably stinky too, because of the fish.

INES: Yes. Well it was pretty good because they soaked for a long time and they had to change the water often. But the stores don't carry it anymore. It's become so expensive that no one can afford it or find it. But when we were in England, I remember seeing it in their stores.

AUDREY: On which corner of Filbert and Columbus was Mrs. Cafferata's store?

INES: On the [northeast] corner, where the coffee shop and the antique store is now [Caffe La Piazza and Andrea's Antiques & Restoration].

AUDREY: I loved the story about the loaf of bread standing up against the door -- no wrapping.

INES: No! And like, for instance, when you went to get your vegetables there was a very nice store on Columbus Avenue called Lippi Brothers -- about where Ben and Jerry's ice cream store is now. They had the most gorgeous vegetable store you ever saw, and cheese and ricotta and all that. You'd go there and they'd wrap it in a piece of newspaper. You'd get carrots, your beans, and anything that went into minestrone. And they'd bring it home in the newspaper and they made a very good soup. See we had grocery stores all over. On Columbus Avenue it was all drug stores, grocery stores. A *lot* of



drug stores. Anchor Drugs was there when I was a girl, and everybody went to them. It was called Anchor Drug Store. [ANCHOR can still be seen spelled out in tiles in the sidewalk at the entrance to 515 Columbus, now occupied by The Original U.S. Restaurant.]

And then on the corner where the liquor store [Coit Liquor] is now [585 Columbus], it was Roma Drug Store. [Also spelled in tiles at the entrance.] And next to that was a bakery. And next to that Mr. Arata had two stores - - stoves, refrigerators [about where Il Pollaio is now]. And there was a drug store across the corner in the Dante building. [1606 Stockton] We had more drug stores, I think, in North Beach than in all of San Francisco!

AUDREY: And did they all have soda fountains?

INES: No, they didn't go in for that. We did have an ice cream parlor: Athens on Columbus Avenue. They made excellent toffee. And my godfather used to come on Sunday, to a family-style dinner, Mama would have him for lunch, and then he'd take my brothers and I down to Athens and we'd order -- usually it was a sundae. And he'd pay for it and he'd then take off, and then we'd walk back up the hill. They were nice memories.

And there was Favilla Bricca -- that was a furniture store, where Rose Pistola is now. [532 Columbus] They had furniture and refrigerators. Well, I don't know if they had refrigerators; probably ice boxes in those times. And they owned the whole building. Originally it was owned by the Briccas. And everybody bought their stoves there. I always remember going there.

AUDREY: You say Favilla. Was that the first name? Favilla Bricca?



INES: No. They were two last names. Favilla and Bricca. I don't know what their first names were.

AUDREY: Oh it was a partnership.

INES: They were partners, yes. Now the Briccas were rather a, I would say, maybe a little more aristocratic, as you would put it. They were schooled. They were here from Italy maybe a little bit sooner. And the boys were all born here. I'd say that half the family, the boys, became doctors; one was an eye doctor. They were tied in with St. Francis Hospital.

And after the [Favilla Bricca] furniture store, it was a drug store. I think his name was Petrini; Mr. Petrini was the druggist. And upstairs I have a hunch was office space. And next door (where Cafe Roma is now) used to be a flower shop -- Azzaro's. They still own the building, one of the [Azzaro] boys. That was a flower shop, father and son. They made pieces for coffins, funerals.

AUDREY: And you said there was a grocery store down here on the corner of Union and Mason. Isn't it still there?

INES: Yes, it's still there. They were Italians at one time; first it was Dal Pagetto and then it was Tarantino-Alioto. They were cousins or something. That grocery store originally used to be down in the middle [of the block] between Powell and Mason, and then they moved up to the corner. The Dal Pagetto brothers were the original owners of the grocery store. Then they moved it to the corner and sold out to the Tarantino-Alioto partners; and





there used to be a butcher in there. And it's really the only grocery store left; now there's a Greek owner there.

AUDREY: What did you usually have for dinner?

INES: Mama usually had soup for dinner. Yes. They made the minestrone, or sometimes they had the broth with the little fedelinis in it. You know, little pasta.

AUDREY: So her morning, then, was pretty much spent shopping and preparing a big lunch?

INES: Yes. Mama would go down the street shopping on Columbus Avenue, and sometimes I'd say, "Where have you been?" Oh, she says, "I met Rosie down the corner and we were talking about this and that." That was their outing. They never took a bus or a streetcar; that cost a nickel! And they'd come up loaded . . . but they'd meet all their *paesane* and friends and they'd stand on the corner and talk about different things.

AUDREY: And she came up the hill with the packages?

INES: Oh yes. She usually had some kind of a cloth shopping bag. The butcher was down on Union Street opposite the little park, you know, where Frank Marini's statue is. There used to be a very very nice butcher shop and a grocery store combined; it was called Washington Square Market. [On Union between Powell and Columbus]. And next door to the market there was a bakery (I don't remember the name of it), and the bakery was run by these people named Molinari, and they made the best panettone and buccellati that



you ever saw. But they were the strangest people. I never saw them smile; they never said, "Thank you." And they were just very, I don't know how to describe it. But their boy became a very famous . . . into radios and electronics. He invented something.

AUDREY: They were Molinaris, but not relatives?

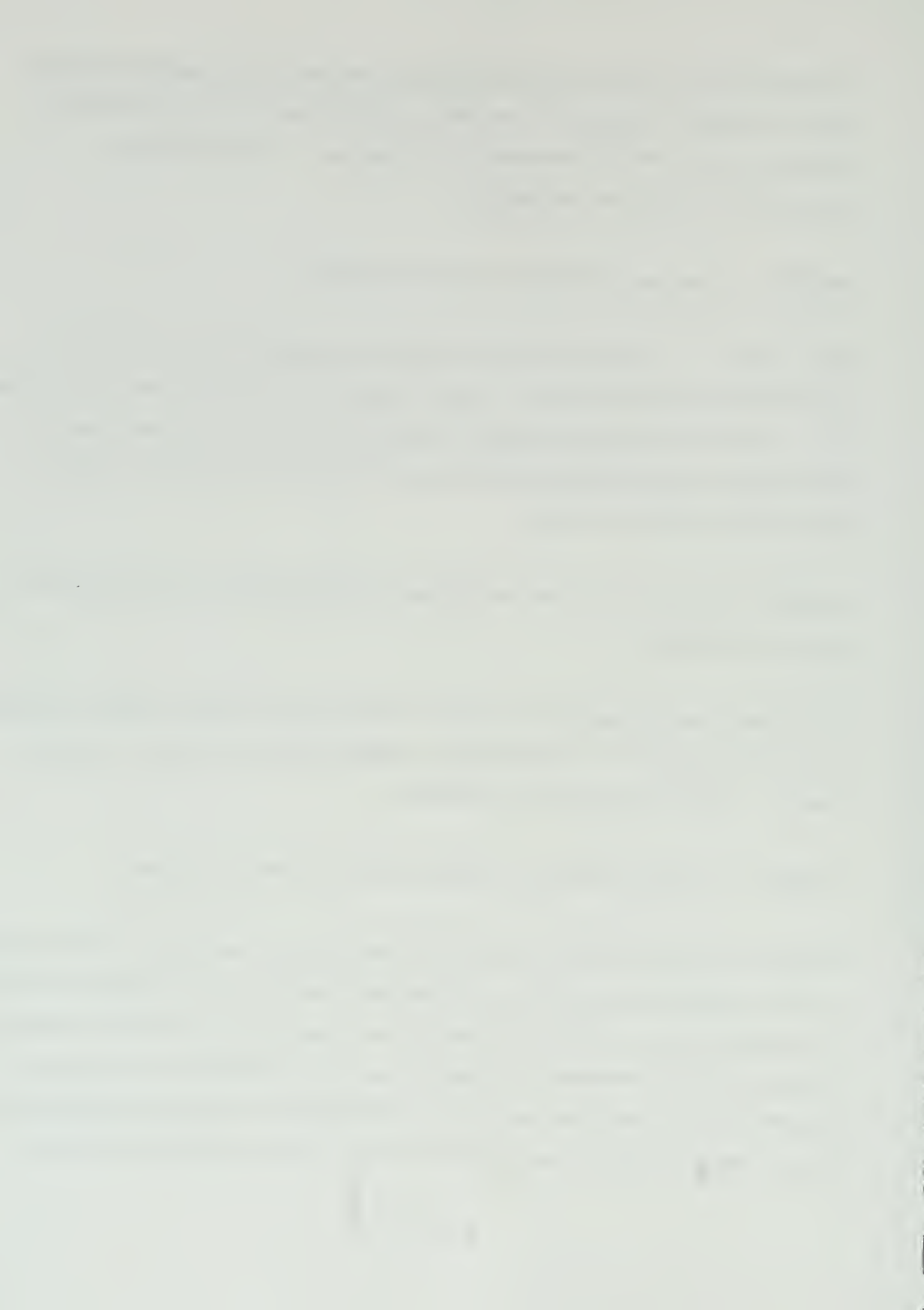
INES: Right . . . see the Molinaris that have the salami store on Columbus [west side near Vallejo Street] -- they're from Piemonte, but they're all gone now, I think. Have you ever shopped in there? It's very good. They make a good soup. Sort of an old fashioned way. Their cold cuts, salami, cheese, ravioli and tortellini are great.

AUDREY: You said the women would meet on the street corners during their grocery shopping . . .

INES: Yes, they'd stand on the corner and talk about different things. Maybe they got a letter from home [Italy] or different things like that. That was their . . . what they liked doing, gossiping.

AUDREY: Did they ever stop in each others' kitchens for coffee?

INES: I don't think they had that much time [laugh]. But they'd visit at night a lot. I always remember when we lived here and my aunt and uncle lived over on Lombard Street, and we'd go visit them. One thing I remember is coming back up the hill; I wanted my father to carry me. And my mother used to give me one of these [gesture: a pat on the bottom], [laugh] and that's how I got up the hill! I might have been about four or five, something like that.



We'd go over after dinner, sometimes, and the folks, naturally they talked about Italy or their jobs, and the ladies talked about recipes and babies. And the boys played outside. My uncle was difficult; he was the oldest son in my father's family. We called him primo janitor -- the first janitor [laugh]. He always had a little bit of pride, I don't know how to explain it. He and my father didn't speak for awhile. But they got over it and we visited a lot.

AUDREY: So basically you went and visited as a family; not so much just the women -- friends and neighbors -- gathering in each others' homes.

INES: Not so much, because they all had things to do, you know. Like Mama made all her own raviolis. And the washing . . . But holidays we'd get together with family. My aunt and uncle would come here and maybe there'd be twenty of us around this table. Or sometimes in the afternoon maybe my mother would go see my aunt, or if someone was sick they would go see them. But they had so much to do they didn't have much time for visiting. Holidays was a big thing; they'd make raviolis for days. Visiting was their entertainment.

AUDREY: Let's talk about the men. You mentioned that you father belonged to a club called the Balilla Club.

INES: Papa had the club. The Balilla Club. They would have dances and picnics -- family affairs. Balilla was some kind of a Genovese hero, who killed somebody with a slingshot -- my father used to tell that story. The men had their meetings down in Garibaldi Hall on Broadway between Columbus and Kearny. Upstairs. We used to go upstairs I remember. They had wonderful



dinners there, and it was a big dance hall. It was on the south side of Broadway. Of course, out in the Mission there were several [Italian] clubs; but we never went out there so much. And in the latter years, they had them [meetings] down here at the Italian Athletic Club [on Stockton]. My husband was a member there, but he never belonged to the Balillas. Papa did. And once you died, another member took your place. I think it still exists. It was a limited membership -- maybe 30 or so. Very exclusive it was. And they were all Genovese. And we'd go to these picnics and they'd bring their jug of wine. Everybody had that little suitcase which looked like a doctor's case [laugh] and they had their wine in it! Of course, it was Prohibition during some of that time.

AUDREY: How can you get a jug of wine in a suitcase?

INES: Well, they had the glass jug with the wicker around it. And the suitcase just closed [around it]. And it just fit in sideways.

AUDREY: Oh, so it was a fat suitcase . . . just to accommodate . . .

INES: Yes, the one jug. Yes. And everyone brought one . . . they'd get pretty plastered. And then they had dances at the picnics. They had a dance floor! The Balillas always went across to the East Bay. I forget the name of the [picnic area]. We took the ferry boat over, then the train. The men brought all the food and everything was cooked over there. This was ladies' day off. And the men carried the wine. The ladies had the day off. They didn't do a thing. And they had dances, the dance floor. They had a band, an accordion.

AUDREY: Do you remember any of the dancing?









Family Picnic c. 1907

Ines' parents, bottom left, were married the following year

INES: I don't think I was grown up enough for the dancing part of it. We used to run around and they had a creek there where we could get all dirty. Stuff like that.

Here's a picture of my Mama and Papa at a picnic just before they were married. Look how they dressed for a picnic. Imagine dressing this way for a picnic! See Mama's little cross. I still have it. And she had the chain. That was the engagement gift. When you got engaged they gave you the watch on the chain (I still have Mama's), then the bracelet, then the earrings. Then the engagement ring came last. I still have all those of Mama's.

AUDREY: Did they propose first, and then the gifts started?

INES: Well, yes, from what I understand.

AUDREY: Do you remember the original Rose Pistola restaurant?

INES: Oh she was down on Powell. Where Frank Marini's statue is, across from there. She was there [on Powell between Union and Filbert]. And the show [the Milano, later Palace Theater] was down the street.

AUDREY: Do you remember riding the cable cars when you were a kid?

INES: Yes. I went to work every morning on it. I took the one down here, around the corner [on Mason Street], and went all the way to Market Street, and then walked down to Mission and Fifth. I worked for a real estate [company] out in the Mission district and took the cable car every morning.



A couple of times it went off the track, you know [laugh], and they'd come around those turns. I never really appreciated it because you sure got your feet stepped on! And now, you notice how they hang on to the outside, but they don't fall off, really.

AUDREY: Didn't they always hang on like that?

INES: Oh yes, but at first they wouldn't let you. Because you know it was prohibited. But mostly it would be a young man or someone like that, but you never saw a lady hanging on them. And it went down to Market Street, made the turn and came back.

AUDREY: You suggested when I left last time that I go look in Marion Alley.

INES: Did you go? And did you see the plaque that Mr. Mana put up?

AUDREY: I did. And I saw the plaque there [which reads "Molinari Mana Park"]. But what was so touching was that I saw the tree your father planted, which you had spoken about; and then I looked at the photo again [page 174 in Myrick's book, San Francisco's Telegraph Hill] and I saw that the tree was only this big in the photo; it looks like a little sapling. [Photo was taken in the late 1930s.] And now it's this huge beautiful Blackwood Acacia!

INES: I think there was a tree left over from something or other and he put it there. On that other house, the ones who are fighting to put a garage in the back, they have something in their window -- a plan of what they want to do. That's why Mr. Mana put the plaque up a few years ago -- to call



attention to the fact that it's a *park*.

[Note: Some neighbors who live on Union Street next to the alley -- Marion Place -- want to build a garage under their dwelling and make the alley into a driveway. It would require removing the tree and paving over what is now a lovely park-like area with a view of the Bay. Other neighbors are opposed to turning this public open space into a paved private driveway. As of this writing (July 2001) the San Francisco Planning Commission is reviewing the dispute.]

But there's an attorney who lives in the back, and he's done quite a bit of work [to preserve it]. So he's fighting it; and then Mr. Mana, who's an attorney and former judge, he is fighting it also. Because they don't see how they can get cars down there. And of course the tree, you know in San Francisco you don't dare cut a tree down, unless you do it at night when no one is around.

AUDREY: Right, and it's wonderful to have that tree there, and especially wonderful that your father planted it.

INES: The only thing is every once in awhile they have to come and trim it because of the wires. In fact Papa planted all the trees on out block. Some are gone. But of all the folks who lived here when that photo was taken, I'm the only . . . the Manas and I and the Garibaldis and Mrs. Torre are the only ones left. The Torregino house is still owned by the family, but they don't live in it. But of the original ones, I'm it. Because, like I told you, Papa had the









Ines' Father and Uncle  
c. 1912

house built in, what was it, 1918.

AUDREY: You were three years old, you said.

INES: Yes. I was about three. But I don't know if you want to know about . . . there was one cute story that happened to my older brother. My father, being a garbage man -- I don't know if I told you this story -- they had the horse and wagon, and the trucks that held the garbage were built out like this [gesturing wider at the top], and they were kind of high. Well you had horses then, and the streets were cobblestone. And back when we moved here this street had cobblestone. Well when you brake a horse going down the hill, you have the back wheel against the curb so that the horse doesn't slip. Well my father (and my brother was with him), he hits an old fashioned gaslight we used to have, and breaks it, because the top of the garbage wagon hit it. So my father tells my brother, if someone asks you who did it, you tell them you don't know. Well a policeman came, he asked John and he said, "My father told me never to tell you." [Laugh] So they gave him that nickname of "Honest John" from then on.

AUDREY: And how old was he?

INES: He must have been maybe three or four.

AUDREY: Oh, he was just a little guy.

INES: Yes, he was just a little guy. I probably wasn't even in the picture at the time.



AUDREY: And John became a judge. Well I guess that story about him when he was three maybe predicted what he would do: "Honest John."

INES: Yes that's right. We always said . . . and he still is very . . . like when my cousin Rena died, we went down that morning, and of course she had already been taken away. And we went through some drawers in order to see what, you know . . . Well there was some cash and some change, and there were quite a few pennies. And he put it all down on the list, even to the pennies. His wife said, "Oh for Heaven's sake," but you see that's the way he was. Just that kind of a person. He's going to be 93 pretty soon.

AUDREY: Did your parents live long enough to see the success of their children?

INES: Oh yes. Papa was ninety-three when he died. See Papa always made sure they went to school. He said, "I never had a chance." He was so proud of his sons; he was ready to bust. Mama took it with a grain of salt. If they did something she didn't like, she told them. But for Papa they could do no wrong. But John, the one who became a judge, he and my father were always arguing. They wouldn't give in. One time, in the kitchen, we had the round table and we were having dinner and John and my father got into some kind of an argument. So Papa takes the French bread, you know, the long bread, and throws it at John; John ducks and it goes sailing out the window, breaks the glass and goes down the light well! [Laughter] John must have been in his teens. But we always laughed about it. They were crazy about each other, but they were always arguing. If one said it was black, the other one said it was white. I guess that's why he became an attorney! But Charlie, my other brother, no; if there was an argument he'd go off into the bedroom.



He never argued. He was quiet, a very very good person.

AUDREY: Was he more like your mom?

INES: Yes, I'd say he was more like Mama. And John was definitely my father's side.

AUDREY: And what were *you* like?

INES: Oh I don't know. I think I was kinda . . . I don't know. I don't remember. I probably had my moments.

AUDREY: Was it nice growing up having older brothers?

INES: Yes. Well, actually I didn't have that much contact with them because they were on their own. See there were all empty lots here and they used to play out there and they never got any disease from it. Nowadays they don't want you to touch anything because of the disease and stuff. In those days there were old tin cans, rusty ones. People threw everything in the lots.

AUDREY: What were your mother and father afraid of most? What were their fears for their kids?

INES: I don't know. They might have worried about illness. Now I remember I was supposed to have diphtheria, and the doctor came to give me a shot. And all I remember is that he chased me all over the place; he couldn't catch me. I must have been a little demon! When they gave you a vaccination for chicken pox they used to put a little cup over it. Now they just put a patch,





but at that time they put a little cellophane thing over so you wouldn't scratch. And Charlie and I both had our tonsils out, with the promise of ice cream -- which we never saw! We went to St. Francis Hospital up there, I remember that.

When my mother had me, she got bad tonsils and she went to the doctor's office and they took them out there! Imagine! Right after I was born! And her milk disappeared. So I drank milk that was delivered to the door. Remember how it had cream up to here? And it was all wrong. To this day I can't stand even the smell of cream.

And when I was about four or five years old there was something about my eyes -- the glare bothered me. So we went to the eye doctor and he makes these glasses -- they were square and dark. And in those days when you wore glasses, it was practically a sin. They called you, "cocky, goofy--eyes." I took them one day and broke them in half and that was the end of the glasses. I must have been a demon.

AUDREY: I wanted to ask you, going back to your brothers . . . you said earlier, when you were talking about the Favilla Bricca furniture store that the Briccas were educated. Some became doctors and some became lawyers. But both of your brothers became lawyers too.

INES: Yes, but I think the Briccas were probably more, maybe more money--wise. I mean, they were wealthy right from the start. And maybe they might have been a little bit more aristocratic Italian. You see my folks, you would say maybe, were peasants. But they [the Briccas] were, I think, educated from way back.



AUDREY: So you're saying the older generation [of the Briccas] was educated.

INES: I have a feeling. Yes. And they made the kids go to school and all that. My father, being a garbage man, he used to take them with him -- both my brothers -- on the garbage truck during summer months. And he said, "I wanted to make sure they wouldn't become garbage men." He said, "I wanted them to have an education. It's something that I never had the privilege of." And that's why my brothers went to school down here, and then to Lowell [High School], and on to, one, USF, and the other one to Santa Clara. My younger brother, Charlie, won a scholarship down at Santa Clara because of football.

AUDREY: So neither of them went into the family business?

INES: No.

AUDREY: So who got the business, then?

INES: My father sold his share to a Mr. Garaventa. And that was the end of that.

AUDREY: And your father and his brother were in it together?

INES: Yes. They were at one time partners.

AUDREY: And then he sold his half to Mr. Garaventa?



INES: Actually Papa had his own share. He was a sole owner. And my uncle was also an owner. You see they worked it that way. And then when Papa gave up, he sold his share to this Mr. Garaventa, who went to the East Bay, and I think he owns a big garbage company over there. At the time when he went over there, there was nothing. It's near where St. Mary's college is. And he became very wealthy. And then his other brother went to Marin County and did the same thing. See they just hit it at the right time.

AUDREY: You said earlier that the company had once been called the Scavengers' Protective Union. So I was wondering, did that mean that everybody who worked there had a part in it?

INES: Most of them did. Most of them were shareholders. And then they had people who worked for them. In other words . . . I don't know how you'd describe it. Sometimes they needed outside help who were not shareholders. But now it's more . . . like see my oldest boy, he is a shareholder in the Sunset garbage company. And after so many years they can retire and that share could be sold to somebody else. But he doesn't sell it; it goes back into the company. You see, after the horse and wagon days, when the trucks came in, it seems like everybody wanted to . . . they had a lot of competition. They'd set up another company and go and get the customers at that time away from them. But these competitors didn't want to stay in business and so they would buy them out -- my father's company would buy them out. Finally, there was a Mayor Rolph in San Francisco, and he got ahold of them once and he said, "What's the matter with you fellas, you're being taken. In other words, they're setting up these companies and you buy them out." He said, "Why don't you make yourselves into the Scavengers Protective Union?"



In other words, they became a corporation. And that [the competition] stopped.

AUDREY: OK, so instead of having to buy them out all the time, they came together into one company with each having shares?

INES: Yes. That's it. And they became like a company or a firm.

AUDREY: About what year was Mayor Rolph in office?

INES: Oh he was way back; I think in the 20's. He goes way back. I remember him.

AUDREY: Do you? But you were a little girl.

INES: Oh yes. And then he became Governor of California.

AUDREY: You mentioned in the last tape that in order to escape being up in Healdsburg, when she first came to America, your mom came down here and worked for a tailor named the Baron. Why was he named the Baron?

INES: I don't know. I don't know whether it was his last name or it was just a name. And he did work for society ladies. Mama always said, you know how they wore the bustle? Well one of them would get a little fatter, so he'd let it out. Pretty soon they were there again to have it taken in.

AUDREY: So even in those days women worried about their weight?









**Ines First Holy Communion  
c. 1922**

INES: Yes. I imagine, Maybe my mother's friends and all that, they didn't worry about that. But the society ladies did. You know, imagine they wore elegant gowns, and Mama used to do the hems. That was her job.

AUDREY: How did she learn this skill?

INES: In Italy. In fact, one of my aunts in Italy -- her sister -- taught her. This particular aunt used to make velvet and she taught Mama how to make velvet. I don't know how it works. I can't even imagine.

AUDREY: You mean to sew on velvet?

INES: Well they made the actual velvet. There must be a way of weaving it or something. Most of the girls over there learned to sew. It was one of the things that was a must. I never did. I was hopeless. I always remember, I belonged to a sewing club when I was about sixteen or eighteen. We met once a month in each other's home and we called it The Thimble Club. And I made a slip at that time, you know, with a wide strap -- sort of a camisole. And I don't know, I went to cut a thread and I cut a nice hole in it. Well the lady who taught us to sew, she folded it so you wouldn't see it because the mothers came to see what their daughters had done. My mother said, "You'll never make it." I said, "I know." [laughs] It was so funny. Mama sewed. She made all my clothes, and even the boys' when they were young.

Here's my Communion photo. Don't I look innocent! I was about seven or eight; that's when we made Communion. I hated those shoes. I wanted those nice little thin leather ones; these were canvas. I didn't have small feet and I think they made my feet look even bigger! I remember going with



Mama to Market Street for the shoes. Oh I didn't like them. The shoes and stockings were the only things that were purchased. Everything else was homemade -- even the purse. My cousin made the dress and Mama helped her -- my cousin, Maria Bugatto, who lived with us when she came from Italy. She was quite a bit older than me. She lived with us and she sewed for Levi's. She used to bring me with her on Saturdays; I'd sit there and watch her sewing away. I never learned anything. I never could sew! [Laugh] When I made Communion, Sts. Peter and Paul had only the basement finished. We used to go up to the old church (on Grant and Filbert) for catechism classes, see. Then, by the time I made Confirmation, it was upstairs. The new church was finished. I was about twelve or fourteen by that time. They finished the Church between my Communion and my Confirmation!

AUDREY: I'm still thinking about your mom sewing all the clothes. How did she have time to do that?

INES: I don't know how they did it. Well Papa, imagine, got up at two o'clock in the morning to go to work at that time, because they had horses and they had to be taken care of. I guess Mama had time during the day; they managed somehow -- and shopping and cooking.

AUDREY: And they didn't have refrigerators, did they?

INES: No. That's why they shopped every day. Maybe some things were not perishable, but that's why they went to shop every day for their meat. Some of them had coolers. Upstairs there's still one left, where it sticks out into the alleyway, and it has screens. But if the sun hits it, it's no use. Mama used it for other things, but in those days that's what a lot of people had. A lot of



people got ice boxes. And the ice man came every so often and replaced the ice.

AUDREY: Do you remember that?

INES: My mother never had one, but I know my aunts did.

AUDREY: So horses were used, when you were a little girl, for a lot of things, then?

INES: Yes, in fact here, oh about every so often, there was what we called -- he had a wagon with a horse -- they called him the rag-bottles-and-sacks man. And if you had something you wanted to get rid of, he would buy it, pay you for it. Then there was one man who used to come around and he had a big basket on his back. He sold fish. And he'd have a little horn that he'd blow.

AUDREY: Fresh fish?

INES: Yes. He'd blow the horn and then the housewives would hear him and they'd go out and get . . . and then afterwards he disappeared in the park down here [Washington Square]. There was always some man or men that had a truck and they sold vegetables off the back, and fruit. And there was always one or two parked around the park. Because there were not that many people with cars.

AUDREY: And you remember that?

INES: Yes I remember that. And there were more fish shops in this area. And





one by one they disappeared. Different . . . nice shops, really.

AUDREY: So the fish shops were different from the meat shops?

INES: Yes.

AUDREY: And how about poultry?

INES: Usually, grocery stores had the poultry. The butchers at that time didn't have poultry, if I remember right. So they were part of the grocery store. And they delivered after awhile, when they got cars; you went down and picked what you wanted and they would take it home for you later. Maybe their sons could drive or something.

AUDREY: I see. But you didn't call in an order; you went down and picked it out.

INES: They went down and picked it out. Maybe they had people that ordered by telephone, maybe people with means or something.

AUDREY: I just want to go back . . . you mentioned, you know after we talked last time I thought of all these questions . . .

INES: I know. [laughs]

AUDREY: Well first of all, I wanted to establish, the Molinari who has the Deli down there on Columbus, they're not relatives?



INES: No. They're from Piemonte.

AUDREY: OK, and the Cuneo bakery family, they're not relatives.

INES: No, they were *paesani*, more, is that how you would describe it? They came from the same neck of the woods as Mama and Papa. But we were not related, even though my mother's maiden name was Cuneo. Where my mother lived, there's Molinaris, Cuneos and different other names that, over the years, they all seem to. . . Gagliardo was my mother's mother's maiden name, see. That's how far back that goes.

AUDREY: Oh and you were about to tell me a story about Lava [aunt] Gagliardo.

INES: Lava had gotten a little senile. See, she was quite up in years. And I had the two boys at that time, so we went to visit.

AUDREY: And where was this?

INES: In Healdsburg. She had chickens. And the kids were chasing these blessed chickens all over the place, and I understand that if you do that they don't lay eggs anymore. So I said to my cousin, Ella, her daughter, I said, "Oh my lord, those kids are driving those chickens crazy." And she said, "Oh listen, those chickens haven't laid eggs in years." And she said, "We leave them there, because of my mother." Her mother had gotten kind of fuzzy, and she was in the habit of going to feed the chickens. So they left those old chickens there to keep her happy.



AUDREY: So that would have been your mother's aunt. Now were they the relatives she stayed with when she first came over?

INES: No she stayed with the Peiranos.

AUDREY: No I mean when she first went up to Healdsburg?

INES: Up there, no, she stayed with my mother's sister-in-law, and brother. He was Joseph Cuneo.

AUDREY: OK, so she stayed with her brother.

INES: Yes with her brother.

AUDREY: But not her aunt.

INES: No. Though they lived close by. I think there was about a mile between them -- the ranches.

AUDREY: OK, and they were the ones that she didn't like working for, right?

INES: Well to come here to America and then go get stuck up there . . . the ranches up there were not that pleasant in those days, you know.

AUDREY: And she couldn't have any friends.

INES: No. And then she had to walk to town. She worked in the French



laundry. And my aunt wouldn't let her go to mass, and of course my mother was brought up Catholic.

AUDREY: Why couldn't she go to mass?

INES: Well it's a waste of time! So her uncle (he was friends with the Peiranos) told her that the Baron needed a girl for hemming. Would she like to come. She said, "Yes." So he went and got her. When he got there, he said, "You're coming, aren't you?" And she said, "I sure am. I'm all packed." This would have been my mother's uncle. And he used to have a store around Jackson in the Gold Country. And when he retired, and after Mama was married, he came to live with Mama. She took care of him until he died. My brother remembers him. I wasn't born yet.

AUDREY: You also said that you often had people in your home staying with you who had just come from Italy? Were they relatives?

INES: Yes relatives. I don't know where my mother put them. And then my mother's youngest brother came: Uncle Dave. And he stayed, but he and my father didn't get along at all. My uncle didn't like to work very much, and Papa was a worker. Uncle Dave didn't like to work. In fact, my father got so mad at him once he threw him down the back stairs on Lombard Street [laugh]. He lived with us, and I think my grandmother sent him over to get rid of him because he was giving her a bad time. And then he [Uncle Dave] met his wife, who was really very attractive, who could sew just beautifully. But she had been divorced. See her first husband had decided to come to America to look for work. And she never heard from him again. So she came [from Italy] to look for him. Found that he was shacking up with another lady, so she got a





divorce. And of course when my uncle . . . I can't blame him for it, because she was really a nice person -- they wanted to get married. Of course, you know, in Italy divorce was taboo at the time. They must have written to the family, my grandmother in Italy, and she wrote back and she was very upset. So my mother wrote back and she told her, she said, "She's a lovely person. It's not her fault that this happened." And she said, "You know, my brother isn't the easiest person to live with and I am not saying a word." And that's what happened. And when they found out that her [first] husband died, after many years, they got married down here at Sts. Peter and Paul, and Mama had a little dinner for them.

AUDREY: How nice. But they had to wait until the first husband died before they could have a church wedding?

INES: Yes, at that time, see, divorce was taboo. Now you can get a divorce if you have a technicality. Don't ask me what the technicality is.

AUDREY: You mentioned that you met your husband at a wedding.

INES: Yes.

AUDREY: So you knew the family and he knew the family, and that's how you happened to be at the same wedding?

INES: Yes. That's right. But I went with my brother and his wife. They lived around the Fillmore district. His [my husband's] father had a grocery store there, at Fillmore and Jackson. And there was no relationship at all, even *paesani*, because his family were Toscani. And his mother was Piemontese,



see. Outside of meeting him at a wedding, I never knew Rino before.

AUDREY: What if you had wanted to marry someone who wasn't Italian?  
How would that have been?

INES: I don't know how they would have reacted. I don't think they would have cared.

AUDREY: Your mama sounds very modern.

INES: Yes, she was very flexible, and Papa, whatever Mama said was OK by him. He was just worried about his horses, his wagon, his garden, and his wine. And everything else was left up to Mama.

AUDREY: As a little girl were you interested in your father's horses?

INES: No. My brothers went with Papa. Especially my older brother. Papa would take him with him. And I was never too happy with horses. You see what happened -- I don't know if I told you this before -- when we lived on Lombard Street, like I told you, they had cobblestones. And they would come down with the horses and wagon, and evidently a horse slipped and fell and broke its leg. And in those days, that was the end of a horse; they shot him right then and there. And I guess I was a little girl, and it scared me. I guess you see this horse was thrashing about. My mother said, I was always wandering off. How many times some friend of the family would find me walking around. They even found me up on Telegraph Hill once, and there was nothing there at the time. And so she said, "It took that to make you stay in the house." It scared me so much that I must have had dreams or something.



I would never leave. She said, "It took that to make you stay put."

AUDREY: But you don't remember it?

INES: No I don't remember it at all. Just what Mama told me. But I'd always had something, some fear, you know. We used to go to a resort up near Chico, called Richardson Springs. And we'd rent a house up there, and they had these waters that . . . to take baths, mud baths and stuff like that. But they had two nice swimming pools. We stayed in the cottage, but they had a nice hotel. And this lady comes to me and she says, "Why don't you come riding with me." And I said, "Oh I'm not . . . I've never been on a horse," and all that. "Oh, no problem." So she comes down, all dressed in the jodhpurs and all that. And here's me, I had slacks on. And we went. I told the man at the stable, "Would you mind giving me some old tired horse? I'm not a rider." Well she was [an old horse]. She just wanted to go back to the stable to eat. See there were snakes up there . . . they didn't like 'em either. But anyway, I ended up back at the stable.

AUDREY: How old were you then?

INES: Oh I must have been about fifteen, sixteen, something in that area.

AUDREY: So horses were not your thing.

INES: Yes, they're nice but even now I can't . . . you know, if they're far away, it's fine.

AUDREY: Doesn't that say something about the neighborhood, that a three



year old could go out wandering around and nobody would panic that you'd get kidnapped.

INES: No. You see there was no . . . now you wouldn't let a child out like that. Of course there's so much traffic, but then there was nothing, see.

AUDREY: And the neighbors were all friends.

INES: Yes, everybody knew one another. And a friend of my brothers found me up there. See, you know what people used to do. They had goats, and they would tie them up there [on top of Telegraph Hill] so they could eat the grass. And now you can't even imagine that there might have been something like that.

AUDREY: So when you were little, maybe you went up to see the goats. Maybe you liked goats!

INES: [Laughing] That's right. I didn't think of that.

AUDREY: So in 1918 and 1919, when you were three or four, there were goats on Telegraph Hill. And the property belonged to . . .

INES: I guess the City. Because even here, when we moved here [to Union Street]: empty lots next door, and empty almost all around. And we used to run wild in those lots, you know, playing.

AUDREY: Who owned the goats?





INES: The goats. I don't know. I always remember, my father buys a *capretto*, which is a goat, baby goat. They called them *capretto*, see. And in fact now, if you want them, some of the butchers will get them for Easter. Everybody had *capretto* for Easter. Well Papa gets this little thing and puts it in the garden down behind the house to grow. And my brothers made a pet out of it. And when Papa kills this goat, this nanny goat, they wouldn't eat their dinner. They absolutely refused.

AUDREY: How about you?

INES: I didn't know, probably. I was so young it didn't matter. But I always remember that *capretto*.

AUDREY: It is hard to imagine goats on Telegraph Hill.

INES: Yes, this is way back, you know. What, about 80 years ago? And now, it's changed so. We all shopped up there on Grant Avenue at one time. That's where most of the stores were. Grant Avenue, or [previously called] Dupont. The Church was on the corner [northeast corner of Grant and Filbert]. And then all the way down near Union there was also a dress shop there. Actually it was more of a general merchandise store. Like they had long johns for the men, and aprons, and she had a way of decorating the windows that was really out of this world. And everybody went up there to buy material, because everybody sewed; all the ladies sewed in that time.

AUDREY: Are you talking about Tassano's Dry Goods?

INES: Yes. That was between, I'd say between Union and Green. There used



to be a butcher shop on the corner of Union and Grant [Iacopi's]. I don't know what there is now, because it's all changed up there. In fact, Soracco Bakery used to be on Grant.

AUDREY: So the Soracco family has been here a long time?

INES: Oh they've been here forever. They come from the same neck of the woods as Mama. They've got a little gold mine there now, I think. They used to charge 25 cents for it. [The price for focaccia is now \$2.75 at Soracco's Liguria Bakery on the northeast corner of Filbert and Stockton.]

AUDREY: One of the other women I interviewed said she remembers going by Soracco's on Sunday morning, and they'd get their breakfast there and then go to mass.

INES: Yes, they picked up their little package of focaccia. But still, like you've probably seen it, on holidays the line of people waiting to buy focaccia goes halfway up Filbert Street.

AUDREY: Do you remember getting dressed up for church?

INES: Yes. For Easter we always got a new outfit. And then of course we went to Church. I belonged, after awhile, to the Handmaids, they used to call them -- it's a Catholic thing -- and we had little outfits, and we marched. And then on Columbus Day, all those little groups that belonged to the Church, we marched in the parade.

AUDREY: I see. What did the Handmaids do?



INES: I think we wore a white outfit, and I guess we were tied into the church. I suppose we were ready to be sainted, but I doubt it. [laughs]

AUDREY: So it was like a little girl's club?

INES: Yes it was a little group like they have the Holy Name Society, and all that sort of stuff. Well that was . . . we were called the Handmaids or something.

AUDREY: How old were you then?

INES: Oh I could have been maybe eight, nine, in that vicinity.

AUDREY: That wasn't when you were trying to sew, was it?

INES: No, though they did have sewing at Sts. Peter and Paul. And we had the nuns: the Holy Family Nuns. They were awful nice. And then we had little plays. I remember once, I was a chicken with spots all over made of crepe paper. That part I remember. And then communion and confirmation. I made communion in the basement. My brothers made it up on the corner where you are [Filbert and Grant].

AUDREY: And so the church basement served for a long time, until they got it built.

INES: Until they built the top part.



AUDREY: That must have been exciting, to watch that church being built?

INES: Yes it was. And it was kind of a struggle, I guess, to get the money together. And then one time, while it was half made, some nut put a bomb on one side, and it kind of destroyed it. And I think they caught him. I remember. It was quite big excitement in North Beach. And then the police stayed there for a long time.

AUDREY: While they were building?

INES: I guess some nut didn't like the Catholic Church or he was mad at them or something. [See David Myrick's account of the dynamite blasts on pages 141 and 142 of his book San Francisco's Telegraph Hill.] When it was finished, I made confirmation upstairs. It is a nice church.

Have you ever been to St. Domenic's? [On Steiner and Bush in the Fillmore District] See my husband was tied in with that church, because he lived only two blocks away.

AUDREY: What did your husband do for a living?

INES: My husband? He graduated from Galileo in '28, and went right to work for W. R. Grace and Company, which was a shipping company. And he was there until he retired. And he was lucky to have a job. In those days, jobs were hard to find and he took his check home. It was Depression years and people struggled. And then when he retired . . . when he was whatever he was, 60-something, the company gave us a trip to South America. For 53 days, I ceased cooking. And we went down to Mexico, we went through the





Panama Canal, Columbia, and Buenos Aires, and Chile, and then we went down around the Horn, they call it, you know, and came up on the Pacific side. And we went to Chile and Peru. It was very interesting. It was a small ship; there weren't too many on it.

What they [W. R. Grace and Company] brought up from down there was coffee. That was their big thing. And during the war years [World War II], they used to bring up nitrate to make bombs and stuff. And that was down, way down at the foot of Chile. They used to bring that up.

AUDREY: To San Francisco?

INES: Yes. Nitrate they called it. Something that you put in explosives, I guess. So we had one child already, and working for that type of company he didn't have to go into the [military] service. So he managed to get out of that.

AUDREY: Oh I see, because it was the defense industry? And you also had a child.

INES: Yes. And so he worked there all his life practically. In different departments, sometimes insurance; he started out as accounting and all that. He was a born accountant, definitely. To the day he died, he was still working at it.

AUDREY: You said he went right from high school into it?

INES: Yes, right from Galileo.



AUDREY: Did he have any training in high school in accounting?

INES: Well maybe they took bookkeeping, you know how they did. But there was no formal education. Actually, I think if he had gone on to college, it would have been . . . but it was Depression years and they were just barely making it.

AUDREY: You said he took his check home. He turned his pay over . . .

INES: To his mother. And then she would give him enough for lunch, or if he went out. And they found fun things to do without money. They managed. In fact, I was talking to one of his friends the other day and he's the last of them. And he said, "Oh I feel awful. I just can't wait to go." And he's about 90 years old. I said, "Oh Jack, hang in there. It's about all you can do." But he used to tell me little stories. They used to do mischievous things.

AUDREY: That's what I was wondering . . . when you were a teenager, or a very young woman, what kind of things did you do in the neighborhood?

INES: Well, church mostly. That was the center. And then at school, they'd have different little things that you got involved in.

AUDREY: How about boys? What was your parents' attitude toward them?

INES: Well, I would say, Mama didn't particularly care, except once I was going out with a fireman who was old enough to be my father. And the folks had a fit. They didn't think he was quite . . . and in the meantime I met my



husband. That settled that one. But he [the fireman] was very fascinating. You know how an older person is . . . But that ended. I knew his sister and all that. In fact, I worked with her. In those days you couldn't get a job unless you knew somebody. That was the only way.

AUDREY: Well it sounds like that's how you got husbands too?

INES: Yes. That's right too. See, in those days, when there was a wedding, you know a family wedding, the children went also -- the young people. In fact, that's how my two boys -- older boys -- met their wives.

AUDREY: It runs in the family.

INES: My husband's cousin, his daughter was getting married, and her husband-to-be was in the Army. And his buddy was supposed to be best man. Well, he got campused; in other words he did something wrong and they wouldn't let him out. So they called Rino up and said, "Do you think Leon would be best man?" It was one of those last-minute things. So we were all at the wedding, and the two boys met their wives: sisters.

AUDREY: So two brothers (your two sons) married two sisters?

INES: Yes, married two sisters.

AUDREY: That's amazing.

INES: Yes, isn't that funny? And that's how you met people, at weddings. But now they don't ask the children anymore, because it's expensive. And that



was your social life. And then Papa being in the garbage company . . . They had dances and picnics, and that was your entertainment at that time, and it was fun. In fact, most of the picnic grounds were in the East Bay. I think one was called Idora Park. And there was another one in San Rafael. And the garbage company would have a picnic every year. Of course, I told you earlier about the men's club (the Balilla Club) that had the picnics and dances too. They'd have these family affairs.

You didn't hear about the women's clubs until later on. In the late 30's they had the Victoria Colonna Club, which was kind of a lah-di-dah Italian ladies club, which was one of the most boring things. I didn't belong to it, but I used to go to some of their affairs -- and they kind of thought they were a little bit above the average, or above us peasants as you would put it. We called them "North Beach Society".

AUDREY: Were the Ghirardellis in that group?

INES: I don't think so. The Ghirardellis might have been a little more business oriented, like the Briccas -- families that maybe had gotten here sooner and had built up a reputation.

AUDREY: How about the Aliotos?

INES: The Aliotos were different. In fact, I made communion and confirmation with one of the [Mayor Joe Alioto's] sisters. I knew Antoinette, and she had two other sisters. Once in awhile I see her, you know, I meet her someplace. She's always very pleasant. One of the girls married a Dr. Bonfiglio, who lived down on the corner of Mason and Union. The Bonfiglios





were also from my mother's part of Italy, and they had the two boys. And they both became doctors. We used to go to the boys. And Nick, the oldest one, and my brother Charlie were very close friends, and both of them died within a year of one another. Much too young. And they were both very nice boys. It was a shame they both should die so young. The Bonfiglios owned the house on the corner of Union and Mason where there's a glass place now. See they were all Italians there.

AUDREY: Getting back to the women's clubs. You said your mom didn't belong to a women's club, but she and her friends would meet on the street corner . . .

INES: That was their thing. Later on my mother had some friends who liked to play cards. She liked to play, what was it that they played . . . canasta or something like that. And sometimes they needed a fourth, so I'd go upstairs and play with them. But they had a different way; no intrigues, you know, and they were happy.

And then the holidays, my mother would have maybe Christmas and my aunt would have Thanksgiving. And New Year's -- because in Italy, I think New Year's is more important than Christmas, right? At least my mother said that was the only time they had some meat to eat. So one of my aunts that lived downstairs, she'd have a holiday, then Mama upstairs . . .

AUDREY: The whole family. And you remember your mom as a happy woman?

INES: Yes. Mama was very easy-going. If you got her angry, you never knew



it. But she settled the question. It's like I told you about my brothers, and she said, "We're moving up to Union Street." And that's all she said. She didn't make a big issue of it. So that's how we got here.

AUDREY: But she . . . she picked certain things that were most important to her, and those she insisted on?

INES: Yes. And she was a very good cook. An excellent cook. She could make something out of nothing.

AUDREY: And a seamstress as well.

INES: Yes, she sewed. She did all my clothes.

AUDREY: Everything by hand?

INES: Yes. But she also had the sewing machine; an old Singer sewing machine.

AUDREY: With the foot treadle?

INES: You could hear it.

AUDREY: You know that's another thing, all the sounds that you don't hear anymore: the sewing machine, and the horses.

INES: No. Everything's electric, or it's I don't know, instant everything, let's put it that way. And they made such good dishes. Mama taught me quite a



few, but she just had the knack. She was a born cook. She didn't like housekeeping; that kind of bored her.

AUDREY: It sounds like she was really an artist.

INES: And then she also took in relatives. My cousin from the family she was with originally in Healdsburg -- she came down. Della, her name was, and she slept with me, and she worked for the Bank of America down here. And she stayed with us for quite awhile. And then my cousin from Sacramento, he was going to electric school, and he stayed here. Mama always had some boarders all the time. That's the way it was done.

AUDREY: Did you resent having to sleep with your cousin?

INES: No. Then there was another cousin, Maria -- my mother's niece from Italy. She wanted to come to America. And she wrote to my mother and said, "My father says to wait, that the passages will get cheaper." So my father goes down to Fugazi's [travel agency], because he knew them well, and he said, "Is it true?" And they said, "No. You'll never see them as cheap as this in your whole lifetime," which was true. So Papa gets the fare for her and she comes. You see, her father didn't want her to come because she was a big woman and husky. You know, you're losing your best field hand.

So she came here and my father introduced her to a nice garbage man down the street, Mr. Bevilacqua, who courted her. In those days, when you were going together, they gave you a necklace, and then the bracelet, and then the earrings, and the watch, you know, that kind of stuff. So we had gone to a picnic, and Mr. Bevilacqua brought his wine suitcase [a special carrying case



designed to accommodate a jug of wine]. You know they always brought the big gallon of wine on picnics in those days, and the suitcase got left here. So my mother says to Maria one day, she says, "Are you sure you like him?" And she says, "Well he's all right, but I'm not in love with him." And my mother says, "Why don't you speak up. There's nothing worse than having to get married to someone you don't . . ." The man was a good man, but I would say he wasn't like her real husband. And Maria didn't want to say anything because she didn't want to seem ungrateful to my father, who paid for her passage here. So Mama said, "The suitcase, he left it here by mistake." And she put all the jewelry Mr. Bevilacqua had given Maria in the wine suitcase, and she said to my father, "You started this; you finish it." My mother! [Laugh] That's the way she was. Mama goes in the bedroom; Papa's at the top of the stairs talking to this poor guy; Maria's down the back stairs; and I'm in-between. And in Genovese, "What's she saying? What's he saying?" And every time I'd bring it up years later, Maria would get blushed and all that. And then she got married to Camillo Bugatto (who had also been courting her). And they got married in Sts. Peter and Paul Church. And Mama had the dinner upstairs. Those are the little funny things that happened in the family. I must have been a little snitch.

AUDREY: How old were you then?

INES: Oh I could have been maybe, oh around seven or eight, nine, something in that vicinity. And of course this went on all in Genovese, you can imagine.

AUDREY: So she was the one that you had to share your room with when she . . .









**Ines Belli**  
**Summer, 2001**

INES: Yes, when she lived with us. She was the one who made my communion dress, with Mama's help. And then she worked for the ones who make the jeans . . .

AUDREY: Levi's.

INES: Levi's. And she worked for them for awhile, and then when she got married she naturally stopped working. And her [Maria Bugatto's] son started California Shellfish Company down on the Wharf. And one of my sons works for that company now.

END OF INTERVIEW





